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# THE BURIED LIFE

A STUDY OF THE RELATION  
BETWEEN THACKERAY'S FICTION  
AND HIS PERSONAL HISTORY

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## PREFACE

THE present volume is a by-product of work towards a comprehensive life of Thackeray on which I have been intermittently engaged since 1946. The detailed investigation of Thackeray's family background necessitated by this project led me to an increasing awareness of the extent to which his imaginative life was dependent for sustenance on the persons who figured most intimately in his personal history. When I was invited to speak at the Lowell Institute, I accordingly chose as my topic a consideration of this relationship with particular emphasis on its consequences for Thackeray's fiction. The resulting lectures have been revised and extended since their delivery in February, 1950, particularly in chapters one, five and eight. If chapter five has thereby attained a length disproportionate to its contribution to my principal theme; I must plead in extenuation a desire to put on record the essential information regarding the "original" of Major Pendennis, a gentleman who has not previously figured in Thackerayan chronicles.

Much of what follows has been drawn from unpublished sources. Particularly in chapters two and four, but to some extent throughout the book, I have used manuscript materials in the possession of Mrs. Richard Fuller, Thackeray's granddaughter. In chapter five I have depended chiefly on the Wellesley Papers in the British Museum. Chapter six is based in large part on letters owned by Father Paul Brookfield, Mrs. Brookfield's grandson, and by Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach. Chapter seven is enlivened by anecdotes and other information from the family archives of Mr. Evelyn Carmichael and Mrs. Tempé Monroe, collateral relatives of Major Carmichael-Smyth. I am duly grateful for the use of these varied data.

I must also record certain other obligations. Mr. Ralph Lowell, Trustee of the Lowell Institute, has kindly agreed to the publication of these lectures. My conclusions concerning the autobiographical background of *Esmond* were recorded in abbreviated form for the British Broadcasting Company's third program during the summer of 1949 and were afterwards published in the *Listener*. A summary of the same material appears

in my introduction to the Modern Library's College Edition of *Esmond*. I thank the British Broadcasting Company and Random House for allowing me to reprint copyrighted material. I am indebted as well to my friends Gordon Haight of Yale University and Kathleen Tillotson of the University of London for their attentive reading of this volume and to Miss F. L. Rudston Brown, Honorary Librarian and one-time Secretary of the Royal Society of Literature, for the devoted care with which she has seen this volume through the press.

It only remains for me to note that a post-service fellowship in the humanities from the Rockefeller Foundation and a grant from the Graduate College of the University of Illinois enabled me to spend the academic year 1948-49 in England, where I made the inquiries on which this study rests.

G. N. R.

Urbana, Illinois.

*September, 1950.*

extraordinarily sensitive and impressionable from his earliest years, responded with equal fervor. For the rest, he was brought up like a little prince. Two native attendants were devoted to his exclusive service; and he passed his time playing in the large, high-ceilinged rooms of his father's great house or seeing the sights of Calcutta—the carriages on the Esplanade or the crocodiles in the Ganges—from the neat oxen drawn carriage in which he rode with his black nurse.

Late in 1816, when William was five, it became necessary to send him to England.

What a strange pathos seems to me to accompany all our Indian story! [Thackeray was later to exclaim.] . . . The family must be broken up. Keep the flowers of your home beyond a certain time and the sickening buds wither and die. In America it is from the breast of a poor slave that a child is taken; in India it is from the wife, and from under the palace, of a splendid proconsul.<sup>4</sup>

During his four months aboard the Indiaman *Prince Regent* the boy continued to be well cared for by his own native servant and by a close friend of the family who was also making the voyage. But once in England he found himself plunged abruptly into a hostile world. Kind but preoccupied relatives dispatched him to a school kept by a certain Mr. and Mrs. Arthur in Southampton, an establishment that must be ranked in regard to comfort and efficiency considerably below Lowood School in *Jane Eyre*, if a little higher than Dotheboys Hall in *Nicholas Nickleby*. "What a dreadful place that private school was"; Thackeray recalled forty-five years later, "cold, chilblains, bad dinners, not enough victuals, and caning awful!"<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere in the *Roundabout Papers* he continues: "[It] was governed by a horrible little tyrant, who made our young lives so miserable that I remember kneeling by my little bed of a night, and saying, 'Pray God, I may dream of my mother.'"<sup>6</sup>

The year that Thackeray spent at the Arthurs' school shaped his character quite as decisively as Kipling's was formed by the three years of childhood misery which he records in "Baa Baa Black Sheep,"<sup>7</sup> or Dickens's by the months of moral isolation as a blacking-factory worker which he describes in his fragmentary autobiography.<sup>8</sup> All, in Kipling's words, "knew the worst too young";<sup>9</sup> but Thackeray was the most defenceless of the three. Kipling had a companion in his sister, and Dickens was a mature, and self-reliant eleven, when they were first introduced to the cruelties and meannesses of life; Thackeray faced his ordeal alone when he was barely six. He glanced at this experience in

*Esmond*: "The unhappiness of those days is long forgiven, though they cast a shade of melancholy over the child's youth, which will accompany him, no doubt, to the end of his days: as those tender twigs are bent the trees grow afterwards."<sup>10</sup>

In the following year Thackeray's relatives removed him to a reputable school, where he found existence more tolerable. He had a dreary time, nonetheless, until his mother and her second husband, Major Carmichael-Smyth, returned from India in 1820. Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth thus describes the reunion:

He could not speak but kissed me & looked at me again & again, I could almost have said 'Lord now let thou thy servant depart in peace for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.'<sup>11</sup>

Nor did Thackeray's passionate love diminish as he grew accustomed to being once more with his mother.

Nothing is like my William's affection [she wrote a few days later], he takes my hand and kisses it and looks at me as if he never could look long enough, the other day he said to me 'Mama its a long time since I have seen a Play and I should like to have a treat.' 'Very well dear I said if there's a Theatre at Gosport you shall go, but I can't go with you.' 'Then I'm sure I shan't what's the use of going without you I had rather see you than the play.'<sup>12</sup>

After four years of loneliness Thackeray found himself surrounded once more by the cherishing warmth of maternal affection. This experience, repeated—though with less intensity—whenever he returned home from school during the remainder of his boyhood, fixed his outlook on life. "All sorts of recollections of my youth came back to me"; he noted in his diary many years afterwards, upon revisiting one of his childhood homes, "dark and sad and painful with my dear good mother as a gentle angel interposing between me and misery."<sup>13</sup> Thackeray came to see life permanently in terms of a dichotomy between the warmth and trust of a happy home circle and the brutality or indifference of the outside world. And his remembrance of what his mother had been to him when he was a boy created in him a permanent need for the companionship of a woman whom he could love and in whom he could confide on much the same terms.

## II

Even after the Carmichael-Smyths' return, Thackeray spent only his summer vacations with them. It was necessary that a boy of his position and prospects should receive "the education of a gentleman" and he was accordingly sent for six years to the

London Charterhouse, where his stepfather had been before him. Sydney Smith compared life in the English public schools of this period to "the vegetable struggle of a forest."<sup>14</sup> Thackeray was not well equipped for such a battle. His earlier training had been inadequate, and Charterhouse gave him no opportunity to make up lost ground. Having no stimulus to intelligent curiosity, he fell into habits of listlessness, shunning both from his masters and the subjects that they taught.

Among his companions he fared better: for though near-sightedness made him inept at games, he was liked for his humor, sociability, and good temper. Yet even outside of school hours Thackeray found his first three years at Charterhouse a trial. He boarded at school in an extremely overcrowded and uncomfortable house. Left to their own devices when not in the classroom, the boys formed a primitive, Spartan society in which *force majeure*, mitigated only by a rudimentary and erratic sense of fair play, was the sole authority. A rigorous system of flogging prevailed, which authorized almost any extreme of brutality. Thackeray had been at Charterhouse only a few months when his nose was permanently flattened during one of the boxing matches which furnished the school its principal amusement.

Thackeray's later years at Charterhouse were more tolerable. He was then allowed to live in relative comfort and decency in a private home near the school with fellow boarders who also preferred the novels, poetry, and magazine essays of the day to the classics and mathematics taught in class. Reading led to imitation; and by the time Thackeray left Charterhouse, he liked to write almost as much as he liked to draw, a pursuit in which he had displayed marked talent from earliest childhood. Nor should the usefulness to him in other ways of early immersion in "the microcosm of a public school"<sup>15</sup> be denied. Six years of the give-and-take of a communal life brought him an early acquaintance with the diversities of human nature and taught him how to live in society, to see and enjoy its humors, to meet its difficulties cheerfully and intelligently.

From Charterhouse Thackeray proceeded in 1829 to Trinity College, Cambridge. Here too, though he tried for an honors degree, he found himself unable to achieve distinction in a curriculum limited to classics, mathematics, and philosophy; and he again drifted into idleness. During his second year he fell in with a set of "fast men" from whom he picked up expensive tastes. He grew fond of gambling, playing first with his college friends, but eventually being marked down as a "pigeon" ready



for plucking by professional gamblers, one of whom was the decayed gentleman that later served as his model for Mr. Deuceace. These sharpers won from him I. O. U.'s for £1,500, which he paid when he came into his fortune in 1832.

Meanwhile, Thackeray had given up the university after five terms, passed a winter in the friendly, polyglot society of Weimar, and settled down at the Middle Temple with the intention of studying law. Once more, however, he found himself incapable of steady application to work that he disliked. He began to gamble again, and lost more than £600 during a single evening. He bought a moribund weekly paper called the *National Standard*, which expired under his editorship. For a time he even essayed the most ungentlemanly occupation of bill-discounting. But none of these employments held his interest, and he determined at last to become a painter. In July of 1833, he wrote to his mother, who opposed his decision because of the low social status then occupied by artists :

I think I can draw better than do anything else & certainly like it better than any other occupation why shouldn't I ?—It requires a three years apprenticeship however, wh. is not agreeable—but afterwards the way is clear & pleasant enough ; & doubly so for an independent man who is not obliged to look to his brush for his livelihood.<sup>16</sup>

The Thackeray who wrote this letter was a well-to-do young gentleman proposing to amuse himself by dabbling in the arts. But a few months later most of the rest of his inheritance was lost in the failure of a Calcutta agency house ; and when Thackeray settled in Paris at the end of 1833, he was a struggling apprentice painter with only a few hundred pounds between himself and poverty.

If we penetrate Thackeray's intimate existence between 1830, when he left Cambridge, and 1833, when he lost his fortune, we find that this seemingly careless and superior young man, hanging loose upon the town, was filled with disgust and self-contempt, yet quite incapable of altering his mode of life. On his twentieth birthday he wrote to Edward FitzGerald :

I was looking back yesterday, & I cannot find a single day in the course of my life which has been properly employed—I can only behold a melancholy succession of idleness & dissipation, which now leaves me without mental satisfaction, & I fear without proper repentance.<sup>17</sup>

This was to be his prevailing mood whenever—and such moments became increasingly frequent—he gave serious consideration to his way of life.





In a sense it was a relief to him to lose his fortune ; for with it went the means to indulge his taste for idleness and dissipation. For a while he was very happy studying to be a painter—throughout his life painting remained the employment from which he derived most pleasure—, but by the early months of 1835 it had become clear to him that he could never hope to achieve artistic success. At this time he wrote to his friend Frank Stone, who was already a flourishing genre painter :

I am in a state of despair -I have got enough torn-up pictures to roast an ox by— . . . I have become latterly so disgusted with myself and art and everything belonging to it, that for a month past I have been lying on sofas reading novels, and never touching a pencil.

In these six months, I have not done a thing worth looking at . . . If in another six months, I can do no better, I will arise and go out and hang myself.<sup>18</sup>

### III

Thackeray was rescued from his mood of settled despondency in August of 1835, when he met nineteen-year-old Isabella Shawe at a Parisian boarding-house, where she lived with her mother and sister. It was not long before he told a cousin that he was desperately in love with "a girl without a penny in the world," adding, ". . . I will, if I can, ~~hold~~ before I have committed myself for better or worse. But I don't think that I shall have the power."<sup>19</sup> It was curious to see Thackeray and Isabella together, a friend recalls, "for he was six feet three, and she was below the middle height ; so that ~~she~~ she could barely reach his arm."<sup>20</sup> Though not pretty, she was pleasing in appearance, her best feature being her brilliant red hair. Her manner was very quiet and subdued, that of a shy child rather than of a woman ; and her dependence on her mother was almost painful to observe. She had a passion for music, and her chief pleasure was to play on the piano and sing the arias of Bellini and Donizetti. Thackeray was attracted by her ethereal delicacy, her simplicity, and her entire freshness and innocence. "Your little red-polled ghost pursues me everywhere," he wrote a few months later ; "the phantoms of some of your songs are always in my ears."<sup>21</sup>

During the winter of 1835-36 Thackeray came to know something of the Shawe family. Mrs. Shawe had been born a Creagh of Laurentinum House, county Cork.<sup>22</sup> She married another member of the minor Anglo-Irish gentry, Matthew Shawe, the son of a Galway barrister. Lt.-Col. Shawe died in 1825 in India, after attaining command of the 84th Foot as the culmination

of a distinguished military career, leaving his widow and five children scantily provided for by his savings and army pension.<sup>23</sup> Having returned home from the east, Mrs. Shawe found it necessary to conserve her income by living abroad. But life in a Parisian boarding house did not satisfy this lady's sense of her social claims. She missed the "grand house in the country" where she had grown up, and the camp and garrison society that had deferred to her as the Colonel's lady. She "talked as big as St. Paul's," Thackeray noted,<sup>24</sup> about her departed glories and the heroism with which she had borne life's trials. She looked forward to the day when her daughters would retrieve the family fortunes by great marriages; but for the present she wanted them to live for her and jealously discouraged their admirers.

Thackeray took an instant dislike to her. Anything but a humble man, even in misfortune, he was from the first impatient of her claims to superiority. He had the civilian's indifference to military distinction and the Englishman's scepticism regarding Irish social position. Some years later he was delighted to have his reservations about the Creaghs and their pinchbeck grandeur confirmed by Mrs. Shawe's son Arthur, who told him that "They are all hated in the county to a wonderful degree, vulgar, stingy, extravagant, bad landlords, bad neighbours and the juice knows what."<sup>25</sup>

Mrs. Shawe returned Thackeray's hostility with interest. Too dull to recognize his ability, she saw in him merely the ugly impertinent son of a Bengal civilian (one of the "honourable Cheesemonger-Masters" that Indian military society looked down upon), without money without even a respectable profession, who yet had the insolence to criticize and laugh at her.

Their duel over Isabella, for such it was, though neither may consciously have regarded it in that light, was protracted through an entire year. Thackeray's problem was a complicated one. Passionately in love with Isabella, he sensed that it was unhealthy for her to remain longer within the circle of her mother's excessive affection. Yet he could not propose marriage, for he had no money. At last Major Carmichael-Smyth intervened. He invested a large part of his remaining fortune in a company organized to publish a new paper called the *Constitutional*, with the understanding that Thackeray should be employed on its staff.

While she was secure in the knowledge that Thackeray could not afford to marry, Mrs. Shawe fought a waiting campaign.

But this new circumstance threatened her with the immediate loss of her daughter, and she resorted to drastic measures. In April, 1836, Thackeray wrote to Isabella, announcing that he was to be Paris correspondent of the *Constitutional*.

Does this news please you as it does me ? [he asked]. Are you ready and willing to give up your home, & your bedfellow, and your kind mother, to share the fate of a sulky grey headed old fellow with a small income, & a broken nose ?— Dear little woman, think a great deal on this now, for it seems to me that up to the present time (& considering the small chance of our union you were wise) you have avoided any thoughts as to the change of your condition, & the change of sentiments & of duties, which your marriage with me must entail.<sup>26</sup>

These unguarded sentences gave Mrs. Shawe her opportunity. She told Isabella that Thackeray was trying to separate mother and daughter, she worked on her child's fear of the unknown trials that marriage would bring. A lover's quarrel resulted, but it was soon made up; and after it was over, Thackeray later reminded Isabella, "we made a kind of vow that, happen what would—you and I were bound together and married before God."<sup>27</sup>

This vow was soon put to the test, for Mrs. Shawe shortly afterwards sought to break off the engagement by other means. In July she took lodgings in another part of Paris and forbade Thackeray to visit Isabella. With the aid of a friendly servant he continued to correspond with her surreptitiously; but at length Mrs. Shawe intercepted their letters and managed to persuade Thackeray that Isabella considered their engagement at an end.

My love for you is greater than I thought [he thereupon wrote to her], for it has withstood this terrible three days trial. I have tried to leave you, & you will hardly credit me that I felt obliged to return— for I do not believe in spite of all this heartlessness on your part, that you ever can be other than my wife.<sup>28</sup>

For all her timidity and immaturity Isabella loved Thackeray profoundly; and his reproaches gave her strength to combat her mother's will. There is no information as to the means she used to win her battle. We know only that Charlotte Baynes, her counterpart in Thackeray's rendering of this episode from his life in *Philip*, frets herself into serious illness, until at length her mother, alarmed at this issue of her stratagem, reluctantly abandons her opposition.<sup>29</sup>

In any event, Thackeray and Isabella were married in August. The union was a risky one from the first; and there was an ominous appropriateness in Thackeray's having inadvertently selected for Isabella before their marriage a ring with a diamond

between two opals set in black enamel, "a mourning ring, not an engagement ring," as a friend pointed out.<sup>30</sup> Thackeray hoped that Isabella would develop from "a thoughtless and frivolous girl" to a "wise and affectionate woman,"<sup>31</sup> that she would overcome her dependence on her mother, and become a self-reliant and serviceable helpmate. This she tried to do to the best of her ability, and for a time it appeared that she would succeed.

In the early years of his marriage Thackeray was entirely happy with Isabella. Domesticity was in itself a delightful novelty to him; and he wrote, as he became more intimately acquainted with his wife, that he had never known "a purer mind or a better temper, or a warmer heart."<sup>32</sup> In 1837 the couple removed to London and settled in an unpretentious house in Bloomsbury. Isabella occupied herself with the two children that were born to them during 1837 and 1838, while Thackeray continued to be the most uxorious of husbands. During their first prolonged separation in March of the latter year he wrote to her:

We talked all night of my dearest wife, till I longed to be home, and with her. It is almost a blessing that I came away, for I see now more strongly than ever, how much I love her, and how my whole heart & bowels go with her. Here have we been nearly 2 years married & not a single unhappy day.<sup>33</sup>

But Thackeray's life was not entirely a domestic idyll. He had his fortune to make. The *Constitutional* failed not long after he settled in London, and he found himself, in Carlyle's phrase, "writing for his life,"<sup>34</sup> supporting his family on what he could earn from magazine articles and stories. Not that he was any longer troubled by uncertainty about the future. Full of zest for life, he had grown almost arrogant in the ardor with which he pursued success. He took to the rough-and-tumble of Grub-Street in the eighteen-thirties as if he had been groomed for it all his life. "This London is a grand place for scheming," he wrote, "and rare fun for a man with broad shoulders who can push through the crowd."<sup>35</sup>

The character of Thackeray's writing during this period may best be illustrated from the most elaborate of his Yellowplush narratives, "Mr. Deuceace at Paris." In this grim story of rancorous family hatreds Thackeray tells how the Hon. Frederick Deuceace, who may be observed cheating his way to a small fortune in earlier Yellowplush papers, gets his come-uppance. Deuceace knows that the widowed Lady Griffin and her step-daughter Matilda possess the great Griffin inheritance between

them, but it is not clear to him which has the bulk of the money. He pays his court to both, hoping to be enlightened on this vital point before he has to declare himself. Meanwhile, his father, the Earl of Crabs, a much smoother and deeper rascal than himself, has also entered the lists. Awakening Lady Griffin to his son's motives, he joins forces with her to involve Deuceace, first in a duel in which he loses a hand, and then in a union with Matilda, who by marrying without her step-mother's consent forfeits her claim to the Griffin fortune. Crabs and Lady Griffin also wed; and Thackeray's footman narrator ends his story with the following tableau.

About three months after, when the season was beginning at Paris, and the autumn leaves were on the ground, my lord, my lady, me and Mortimer, were taking a stroll in the Boddy Balong, the carriage driving on slowly ahead, and us as happy as possibill, admiring the pleasant woods, and the golden sunset.

My lord was expayshating to my lady upon the exquisit beauty of the seon, and pouring forth a host of buttle and virtuous sentiment sootable to the hour. It was dalitelle to hear him. "Ah," said he, "black must be the heart, my love, which does not feel the influence of a scene like this: gathering, as it were, from those sunlit skies, a portion of their celestial gold, and gaining somewhat of heaven with each pure draught of this delicious air."

Lady Crabs did not speak, but prest his arm and looked upwards. Mortimer and I, too, felt some of the influents of the seon, and lent on our goold sticks in silence. The carriage drew up close to us, and my lord and my lady sauntered slowly towards it.

Jest at the place was a bench, and on the bench sate a poorly drest woman, and by her, leaning against a tree, was a man whom I thought I'd seon befor. He was drest in a shabby blew coat, with white soems and copper buttons; a torn hat was on his head, and great quantaties of matted han and whiskers disfiggared his countnants. He was not shaved, and as pale as a stone.

My lord and lady didd tak the slightest notice of him, but past on to the carridge. Me and Mortimer lickwise took *our* places. As we past, the man had got a grip of the woman's shoulder, who was holding down her head, sobbing bitterly.

No sooner were my lord and lady seated, than they both, with igstream deliixy and good natur, burst into a ror of lafter, peal upon peal, whooping and screeaching, enough to frighten the ovening silents.

DEUCEACE turned round. "I see his face now—the face of a dovvle of hell!" First, he lookt towards the carridge, and puinted to it with his manned arm; then he raised the other, and struck the woman by his side. She fell, screaming.<sup>36</sup>

The reader of "Mr. Deuceace at Paris," as of Thackeray's early fiction generally, is particularly impressed by the sort of characters with whom it deals and Thackeray's attitude towards these characters. He finds himself in a world like that of Ben Jonson's comedies, where everyone is either a rogue or a dupe. It is true that as a young man Thackeray had much experience of the seamy side of life; yet he knew its hopeful and sunny aspects too. How then is his preoccupation with sordid subjects to be explained? And why did he regard the rooks and pigeons that make up his cast of characters with such implacable hostility?



No doubt they belonged to that unfriendly outer world in which he had himself been robbed and spurned ; but one wonders that did he not see how his pitilessness led him into exaggeration and overcoloring.

In his early work Thackeray seems to have felt it incumbent on him to conceal the kinder side of his character, to show only its harsh and cynical aspect. Tired of the misrepresentations of contemporary fiction, he tried in his own stories to give a stronger and truer picture of life ; but he made the mistake of equating strength and truth with callousness and brutality. Thus it is only as melodrama that the passage which I have cited may be regarded as successful, for in it Thackeray has been content to make his effects through the most obvious contrasts and ironies : the Earl of Crabs mouthing sentimental platitudes one moment, bursting into diabolical laughter the next ; Deuceace calling attention at once to his mutilation and his unwanted wife, while his conquerors drive off triumphant. The strokes are broad and crude, the characters coarsely drawn ; and the reader accordingly remains unmoved.

#### IV

In March of 1839 the Thackerays' second daughter died at the age of nine months. Profoundly depressed by her loss, Isabella grew more and more despondent over her deficiencies as a wife and a mother. These were considerable, for she had come to Thackeray entirely untrained in the management of a household ; nor did she have the pertinacity to acquire the domestic skills that she needed. Moreover, Thackeray had a hundred interests which Isabella could not share. She was a loyal, warm-hearted, unaffected young lady, whose letters show a pleasant talent for easy gossip. But she had been given little education except in "elegant accomplishments"; and she could not share her husband's absorption in literature, art, and the affairs of the outside world. She was in fact a child-wife, and though Thackeray's affection for her did not diminish, he came to treat her very much as David does Dora in the later chapters of *David Copperfield*.

As Thackeray grew better known in London, as his circle of friends increased, he inevitably spent less and less time at home. Isabella did not resent his neglect. Granting that her husband's "time is so precious,"<sup>37</sup> she allowed herself only an occasional wistful complaint to her mother-in-law. From time to time Thackeray, resolving to change his ways, would announce proudly

that he was "growing quite a domestic character."<sup>38</sup> But he did not adhere to his resolution, for at home his wife would constantly break in on his work "with the prettiest excuses in the world,"<sup>39</sup> and his best material came to him as he rubbed shoulders with friends and acquaintances. "Without my favorite talk about pictures or books," he confessed, "I am good for nothing."<sup>40</sup>

In the spring of 1840, as the time approached when her third child was to be born, Isabella was left much alone. She dreaded this event; and as she waited, she worked herself into a state of despondency by brooding over her inadequacies as a wife. Yet towards the end of May she was delivered without difficulty of a third daughter, and her convalescence seemed to give no cause for anxiety.

In July Thackeray's first book, *The Paris Sketch-Book*, was received with flattering reviews. Thinking that this was the tide which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune, Thackeray allowed himself to become so absorbed in his work that he failed to notice Isabella's persistent low spirits and occasional incoherences. It was proposed to him early in August that he go to Antwerp to write a series of travel articles entitled "Titmarsh in Belgium" for *Blackwood's Magazine*,<sup>41</sup> a periodical with which he had long been endeavoring to establish a connection. Frightened by the eagerness with which Thackeray pursued a success which promised to separate him from her still further, Isabella pleaded with him not to leave her. He departed nonetheless; but he was later to recall that she began to laugh as he went away.

Returning to London two weeks later Thackeray found his wife in "an extraordinary state of languor and depression."<sup>42</sup> Still anxious to achieve the success that seemed almost within his grasp, he contented himself at first with taking her to Margate, where she could profit by the sea air while he continued his writing. But Isabella showed no improvement; "nor can I get much work done," Thackeray noted, "with the pitiful looks always fixed on me."<sup>43</sup> In the hope that familiar faces would restore Isabella to her normal condition, he then booked steamer passage for Cork, where her mother and sister were living. On the voyage, he related to his mother,

the poor thing flung herself into the water . . . & was twenty minutes floating in the sea, before the ship's boat even saw her . . . Thus it was that told me her condition. I see now she had been ill for weeks before, and yet I was obstinately blind to her state.<sup>44</sup>

She made further attempts at suicide the next night. The weeks that followed in Cork did Isabella no good and were a period of bitter trial to Thackeray. Mrs. Shawe refused to aid him in taking care of Isabella and overwhelmed him with wrong-headed reproaches. The scar that her taunts left on his mind stands clearly revealed in those chapters of *The Newcomes* in which the Colonel's spirit is broken by the brutal jeers of the "Campaigner." Thackeray himself had known :

in a mean room, in a mean alley of a foreign town—a low furious woman standing over him and stabbing the kind defenceless breast with killing insult and daily outrage.<sup>45</sup>

The futility of remaining in Cork soon became evident, and in October Thackeray took his wife and children to Paris, where his mother gave them the home that his mother-in-law had refused to provide. Indeed, such was Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth's self-forgetful kindness during this period of trouble, that her son for a time regarded her once again with all the adoring trust of boyhood. "In these latter days," he wrote early in 1841, "I have learned to love and admire her more cordially than anything else I know of . . . this woman, who lies awake all night thinking for us and loving us all."<sup>46</sup> During the next year he tried to find some course of treatment that would restore Isabella to sanity ; but doctors in France, England, and Germany proved alike unavailing. He had forgotten ambition. If at first he could not help asking himself, "O Titmarsh Titmarsh why did you marry ?"<sup>47</sup> if he could not help reminding himself that "But for these sad events I was a made man";<sup>48</sup> now he said : "Only let her get well and I shall be the happiest man in the world."<sup>49</sup> His wish was not to be granted. Isabella's mania ceased to be violent, and after a time she overcame her tendency to apathy and melancholy. But she achieved this partial recovery by abandoning her struggle to understand a world too complicated for her, by slipping back into the mental state of a little child. She remained in that condition until her death, more than half a century later.

The heart-sick despair of the months of wretchedness through which Thackeray passed in the fall and winter of 1840-41 profoundly altered his cast of mind. He learned much from suffering. He could now stand apart from himself, observing his own feelings and piercing to their motives, as he never had in the past. He writes in a prayer set down in his diary in July, 1841 :

Oh Lord God— there is not one of the sorrows or disappointments of my life, that as I fancy I cannot trace to some error crime or weakness of my disposition.  
 . . . O give me your help strenuously to work out the vices of character which have born such bitter fruit already.<sup>50</sup>

Thackeray's new self-knowledge brought with it a new understanding and tolerance of others. It was thus that the groundwork was laid for the sad, penetrating vision that distinguishes his great novels.

Despite their catastrophic conclusion, his years of marriage remained his central experience. Looking back at them from the perspective of middle age, he found in their "disaster, grief, and immense joys and consolations" the pivotal episode of his history. Through them he escaped the anathema in which Conrad sums up the theme of *Victory* "woe to the man whose heart has not learned while young to hope, to love—and to put its trust in life."<sup>52</sup> Henceforth what he desired most was to be the one thing that he could never have, a happy marriage. Thus the dichotomy of world and home ingrained in him by childhood experience was reinforced by his own essay in domesticity. More, than ever the standards of the hearth became ultimates to him.

Thackeray's only considerable story of 1841, *The Great Hoggarty Diamond*, testifies to the fashion in which his talent was shaped by what he had gone through. This is a tale of rogues and dupes no less than "Mr. Deuceace at Paris." But in it the arrogance and high spirits of the earlier story have disappeared. No longer merciless and intolerant, Thackeray writes as a fellow-sinner, more in sorrow than in anger. His chief scoundrel, the swindling promoter Brough, is not a monster of calculating malignity like Lady Griffin or the Earl of Crabs, but a complex creation, moved by good as well as bad impulses, self-deluded as well as deceiving. Almost for the first time in Thackeray's fiction, moreover, the reader encounters good and amiable people who are not introduced merely to be trampled upon by selfish and evil characters.

*The Great Hoggarty Diamond* is a moral <sup>moral fable</sup> apologue, illustrating the falsity of the conventional assumption that worldly prosperity is the chief good in life. While Sam Titmarsh has the diamond pin given him by his aunt, all his affairs seem to prosper. But his success is built on sand, and in the end it crumbles away. Having sold his pin, Sam discovers that his apparent failure is a matter of small importance, since the personal relations on which his happiness really rests have survived his débâcle. He is better off than in the days of his prosperity, when ambition led

him to neglect his wife. The story is thus a veiled reflection on Thackeray's recent experience, a testimony to his tardy realization that "Where your heart is, there is your treasure."

## V

But the mood in which Thackeray wrote *The Great Hogarty Diamond* did not prove lasting. He had conceived that story, as he later noted, "at a time of great affliction, when my heart was very soft and humble."<sup>53</sup> As he began to fit together the broken pieces of his life and returned to steady employment as a working journalist, his guard went up once more. His life in the years after 1841 made it inevitable that he should sink the man of sentiment in the wit and cynic.

He had many causes for dissatisfaction. With no permanent home, separated from both wife and children, he fell into a life of Bohemian bachelorhood, living in lodgings and finding his amusement in taverns, clubs, or the homes of his friends. It was a hectic, rootless existence, which he was by no means self-sufficient enough to enjoy. Nor was he altogether at ease with the artists and writers whose company he chiefly frequented. The advantages and disadvantages of their society are suggested in Mrs. Carlyle's description of a party for Mrs. Macready at which Thackeray was present late in 1843 :

I question if there was as much witty speech uttered in all the aristocratic, conventional drawing rooms thro' London that night as among us little knot of blackguardist literary people who felt themselves above all rules and independent of the universe.<sup>54</sup>

Most of the guests no doubt found their associates' bonhomie a sufficient compensation for the sense of being outsiders which Mrs. Carlyle emphasizes : but Thackeray never entirely forgot that in such society he was after all a déclassé. Moreover, though he prospered as a periodical writer, he had to watch inferior men scoring more solid successes. In 1845 he summed up his literary position in the words, "I can suit the magazines (but I can't hit the public, be hanged to them)."<sup>55</sup> He was experiencing to the full what Arnold was later to describe as that "saturnalia of ignoble personal passions, of which the struggle for literary success, in old and crowded communities, offers so sad a spectacle."<sup>56</sup>

Against such a background, one understands why it was that Thackeray's writings in the five years before *Vanity Fair* are

only occasionally marked by the tenderness that characterizes *The Great Hoggarty Diamond*. He has himself best described the style that he developed in the words, "a certain agreeable jocose sneering good-humoured scandalous sentimental sort" of writing."<sup>57</sup> He was always on the lookout for traits of snobbery, meanness, and humbug that justified his discontent with life and allowed him to give vent to his pent-up bitterness. But he took no credit for his censoriousness, realizing clearly what mixed motives lay behind it. "I don't believe Titmarsh has a bit higher opinion of himself," he said in 1847, "than he has of the rest of the world: nor does he much conceal his opinion of the one or the other."<sup>58</sup> So negative an attitude towards life and art provided small incentive to high accomplishment. He preferred to avoid the deeper levels of personality, touched upon briefly in *The Great Hoggarty Diamond*, and to confine himself to satirical reviews, travel narratives, short stories, and "comicalities"—as he called them—, that is *jeux d'esprit* of all kinds.

Only once during this period did Thackeray give full expression to his state of mind in a novel. This was in *Barry Lyndon*, a story received with indifference or hostility by its first readers, and later regarded with dislike by Thackeray himself.<sup>59</sup> ~~Thackeray's theme in this book is essentially that of *The Great Hoggarty Diamond*, the relation between success and happiness.~~<sup>60</sup> Once more he used a story of rogues and dupes to investigate "luck" (or worldly prosperity) and the qualities necessary to its achievement. He asked the questions: does "poetical justice" exist outside the pages of fiction? are the virtuous likely to be successful? are the successful likely to be happy? He sought his answers in the test case of an utter scoundrel, a man at once vain, selfish, licentious, and brutal. And to explore his subject with entire thoroughness, he made his hero relate his own life-story.

One can hardly conceive a bolder expedient. The self-exposure of a "heel," as we call Barry Lyndon's kind today, can be brilliantly managed in a short narrative. Witness the accomplishments of Ring Lardner and John O'Hara. But to protract such an exercise over three hundred pages multiplies difficulties. After the effect of novelty wears off, author and reader alike grow oppressed by the vicious company they are condemned to keep and by the atmosphere of moral squalor they must continue to breathe. As the narrative progresses it becomes increasingly hard to maintain both consistency of characterization and variety of interest.

Thackeray did what he could to meet this challenge by making Barry a prodigy of callous naïveté. When Barry urges, as he does many times, that all his troubles are caused by his "too easy, generous, and careless nature,"<sup>61</sup> he is not a conscious hypocrite, not another Richard the Third, protesting "I am too childish-foolish for this world." Nor is he a grandiose tragic villain, whose moral criteria are inverted, who has said to himself, like Milton's Satan, "Evil, be thou my good." Instead, he is a kind of moral idiot,<sup>62</sup> who constantly gives himself away because of his entire insensitivity to what is ordinarily regarded as right and wrong. Thackeray maintains interest in Barry throughout the novel by leading him into ever more damaging ramifications of self-exposure and by displaying the perverted ingenuity with which he attempts to plead a case that is lost from the beginning because of his inability to comprehend the code by which he is being tried.

As the novel took its course through *Fraser's Magazine*, readers interpreted Thackeray's objectivity as evidence of scorn for normal human susceptibilities and complained that his story was profoundly immoral.<sup>63</sup> At a loss to dispel so stupid a misconception by other means, Thackeray occasionally intervened in his remaining instalments to formulate explicitly the meaning of his novel.<sup>64</sup> In the interests of poetic justice, he wrote, it had been customary in fiction to reward virtue with success.

Does human life exhibit justice after this fashion? [he continued.] Is it the good always who ride in gold coaches, and the wicked who go to the workhouse? Is a humbug never preferred before a capable man? Does the world always reward merit, never worship cant, never raise mediocrity to distinction? never crowd to hear a donkey braying from a pulpit nor ever buy the tenth edition of a fool's book?<sup>65</sup>

(To insist on the "sham moral" of poetic justice is to make "sham characters" inevitable.) The fault lies in the vulgarity of the commonly held ethical standard which recognizes no higher felicity in life than "bodily prosperity."<sup>66</sup>

Readers who protested at Barry Lyndon's "luck," who complained because so great a rascal enjoys a long career of prosperity, had missed Thackeray's point. Barry's good fortune does not bring him happiness. He has no sense of fulfilment because of his failure in the life of personal relations, where the real rewards of virtuous conduct are found. Thackeray makes this clear many times in his novel, but never more eloquently than in Barry's reflections upon returning in middle life to the scenes of his childhood:

The reason is that as a rule he cares to describe the feelings of his characters in detail, to penetrate to the deeper levels of their experience, only when he draws them from persons with whom he had lived on terms not merely of intimacy, but of close personal attachment. If Thackeray's portraits of Miss Crawley and of Jos Sedley are both very nearly flawless, they are yet mere sketches when compared with his portrait of Amelia, which is not flawless at all. To note these two orders of characterization is to wonder if impartiality may not be too dearly bought when it entails the sacrifice of sympathy and penetration, as it usually does in Thackeray's fiction.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### PENDENNIS: HELEN PENDENNIS.

#### I

During the course of *Vanity Fair*'s serial appearance in 1847-48 Thackeray rose from relative obscurity to celebrity. His success was fraught with important consequences for his fiction. It settled the formula to which Thackeray wrote all of his subsequent long novels except *Esmond*. *Pendennis*, *The Newcomes*, *The Virginians* and *Philip* are without exception loose, comprehensive narratives in which, during the course of "a sort of confidential talk between writer and reader,"<sup>1</sup> Thackeray traces the careers of twenty or thirty characters over two decades or more. With characteristic self-depreciation Thackeray maintained in the preface to *Pendennis* that such episodic chronicles must "fail in art . . . constantly."<sup>2</sup> It may be admitted at any rate that, written as they were from month to month, each number completed at high speed shortly before it had to be in the printer's hands, the liveliness of these books comes and goes. Everything depended, indeed, on the alertness with which Thackeray's mind was working at the time that he wrote. If *Pendennis* largely lacks the intensity and unity of *Vanity Fair*, "all that sustained attempt to relate everything to everything else, to make it all tell in developing a central theme,"<sup>3</sup> it was at least composed while Thackeray was living a full and varied life and constantly meeting with people and ideas that he found interesting. The novel reflects this exciting atmosphere and remains in consequence very much alive today.

Thackeray's eagerness to consolidate and extend the success that he had won with *Vanity Fair* affected *Pendennis* in another way. *Vanity Fair* had won general approval, but the approval was grudging. The book's first readers were overwhelmed by the picture of depravity that it presented. "Very clever, very effective, but cruel to human nature," was Mrs. Browning's representative verdict. "A painful book, and not the pain that purifies and exalts. Partial truths after all, and those not

wholesome."<sup>4</sup> Thackeray's critics, friends, and correspondents united in urging him to demonstrate his essential amiability and benevolence in his next novel.<sup>5</sup>

(Moreover, internal as well as external pressures were at work. Recognition and popularity made Thackeray milder and more genial. "Everyday I get more ashamed of my yellow cover and former misanthropical turn," he wrote after the seventh monthly number of *Pendennis* had appeared. "The world is a great deal better than some satirists have painted it."<sup>6</sup>) He was touched when eighty Edinburgh admirers banded together to send him a silver punch bowl:

Such tokens of regard and sympathy [he wrote] are very precious to a writer like myself, who have some difficulty still in making people understand what you have been good enough to find out in Edinburgh that under the mask satirical there walks about a sentimental gentleman who means not unkindly to any mortal person.<sup>7</sup>

(In *Pendennis*, therefore Thackeray quite consciously endeavored to soften the asperities of *Vanity Fair*; to be urbane, kindly, and indulgent.) And since, as Henry James was later to remark, English readers adhere pertinaciously to "the old stupid superstition that the amiability of a story-teller is the amiability of the people he represents—that their vulgarity, or depravity, or gentility, or fatuity are tantamount to the same qualities in the painter himself,"<sup>8</sup> Thackeray had no alternative but to attempt the portrayal of good and amiable people who would embody his positive ideals. He sought these characters perforce amongst those members of his intimate circle towards whom he felt a profound emotional allegiance. Only within this group could he find figures whom he exempted from his generally unfavorable view of human nature, who were in his eyes free from the meanness, hypocrisy, and selfishness that experience had taught him to regard as usual in men and women. So it happened that in *Pendennis* Thackeray drew Mrs. Brookfield, with whom he had recently fallen in love, as Laura Bell, and his mother as Helen Pendennis. I shall center my attention on the second portrait which represents by all odds the more difficult achievement.

## II

Thackeray intended Helen Pendennis to be a quite literal picture of Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth. "Mrs. Pendennis is living with me," he told Arthur Hugh Clough, when he was just beginning his novel, " (She is my mother)."<sup>9</sup> As we have seen, Mrs.

Carmichael-Smyth had been the central figure in Thackeray's early life;<sup>10</sup> and she and her husband were living with Thackeray in London from the autumn of 1848 until the spring of 1850, that is during the whole of the period in which *Pendennis* was written.<sup>11</sup> She read his books attentively and made her opinions known about them very freely. Circumstances were not propitious, one would think, for a candid portrayal.

Yet Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth offered a subject that any novelist might have envied Thackeray. In India she had been accounted "one of the most beautiful women of her time";<sup>12</sup> and she remained "exquisitely handsome" in her English retirement, "fascinating everyone who came in her way."<sup>13</sup> "Of the commanding order of women,"<sup>14</sup> she continued to cultivate at home the "imperial manner"<sup>15</sup> that she had acquired as the wife of a great Calcutta dignitary, and was recognised as a personage wherever she went.

Nor was her character less remarkable than her appearance. The key to it, perhaps, was what her granddaughter described as "her almost romantic passion of feeling."<sup>16</sup> She was incapable of regarding any person or subject dispassionately; her sympathies always became earnestly engaged. But her affection was lavished chiefly on her only child, whom she regarded as "the divinest creature in the world."<sup>17</sup> Not without reason did Thackeray acknowledge to Dickens a fondness for Mrs. Steerforth in *David Copperfield* and hint that Mrs. Steerforth's relationship with her son resembled his own with Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth.<sup>18</sup> Mrs. Steerforth's maternal pride, her implicit faith in her son's generosity, nobility, and great capacity, and her seeming inability to speak or think about anything else will be recalled, as will the close resemblance between mother and son which made disagreement between them particularly painful. In all these points Mrs. Steerforth brought his mother to Thackeray's mind. Nor did Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth's love fail to elicit an answering tenderness. "If I were to die," Thackeray wrote late in life, "I can't bear to think of my mother living beyond me."<sup>19</sup>

Though by no means a *bas bleu*, Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth was a woman of considerable culture and refinement. In her correspondence she adheres to something of the stateliness and formality of an earlier age; and the family archives provide other testimony to her considerable command of language in the form of an unfinished novel for children and a sheaf of poems. She had no sense of humor. "I would die," Thackeray once said, "rather than make a joke to her."<sup>20</sup> Her enthusiasm and

energy were such that she could not live without some person or cause to serve as a focus of interest in her life. She passionately advocated such forlorn hopes as hydropathy and homeopathy, and she was rarely without a protégée chosen from among the lamest of lame ducks. Since she could not endure that anyone whom she loved should differ from her, it was not always easy to preserve the harmony of the household.

Her most troublesome crusade was in support of Evangelical Christianity. From her Indian letters it would appear that, while always pious, she did not greatly concern herself with religious doctrine until her return to England. But she was of a melancholy turn of mind; Thackeray noted that he inherited from her his own tendency to gloominess, and remarked her "favorite propensity . . . to be miserable."<sup>21</sup> In the leisure of country retirement it was not long before she adopted with her customary fervor the gloomy creed of Evangelicalism. She became, in Thackeray's words, "a dear old Gospel mother who is a good Christian, and who always has chapter and verse to prove everything."<sup>22</sup> She forbade cards in her household as a waste of time; she insisted upon regular church attendance and the reading of improving works.

During the years of Thackeray's young manhood, his mother's jealous affection tormented while it comforted him. She was perpetually anxious about the spiritual and temporal welfare of her only child. Exceedingly ambitious for him, she was correspondingly depressed by his long deferred success; and Thackeray was haunted by her unexpressed disappointment. Inevitably his mother's unconscious effort to dominate his life led Thackeray to revolt. They argued over religion, the value of university training, painting as a profession, and many other subjects. "We differ about a thousand things," Thackeray said in maturity. "Those of a past generation can't feel with us."<sup>23</sup> And, indeed, as his knowledge of life increased Thackeray came to regard his mother in a very different light than he had in youth.

It gives the keenest tortures of jealousy and disappointed yearning to my dearest old mother, [he told a boyhood friend in 1852] . . . that she can't be all in all to me, mother sister wife everything but it mayn't be—There's hardly a subject on wh. we don't differ. And she lives away at Paris with her husband a noble simple old gentleman who loves nothing but her in the world, and a jealousy after me tears & rends her. Eh! who is happy? When I was a boy at Larkbeare, I thought her an Angel and worshipped her. I see but a woman now, O so tender so loving so cruel.<sup>24</sup>

Her son's withdrawal of implicit trust was hard for Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth to bear. In 1855 Thackeray noted his mother's

jealousy of one of his close friends of later life, Mrs. Frederick Elliot, whom she had met for the first time :

The dear old soul made me pass thirty miserable hours, and kept me awake at night and gave me a headache—What, won't this otherwise saint of a woman ever cease to strike and wound me ?—It is all a sort of fury of balked fondness because I won't like her enough.<sup>25</sup>

Long after Thackeray became famous, Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth's granddaughter relates, ' she used to make him unhappy by her reproofs and she always treated him as if he was a little boy.'<sup>26</sup>

### III

In *Pendennis* Thackeray sketches his mother both as he saw her in youth and as he saw her in maturity. These divergent views were facilitated, perhaps made inevitable, by a change in perspective that occurs during the course of the book. The first half of *Pendennis* is a *Bildungsroman*, a semi-autobiographical novel describing a young man's entry into the world. The charm of these earlier chapters, the impression of delicious maturity that Tennyson, for example, received upon reading them,<sup>27</sup> derives from Thackeray's combination of vivid, immediate realization of Pen's youthful experiences with wise and penetrating interpretation of these experiences as they appear to him from the vantage point of middle age.<sup>28</sup> This contrast of youth and maturity, this " doubleness " of vision, is lost in the later chapters of the novel, in which Pen, now established as an author, becomes simply the alter-ego of Thackeray after *Vanity Fair*.

Pen is portrayed in childhood as an only son, the sole object of his mother's adoration, the center of her world. The little scene in which he is first introduced to the reader is a direct reminiscence of Thackeray's boyhood summers at Larkbeare with Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth :

At sunset, from the lawn of Fair Oaks, there was a pretty sight : it and the opposite park of Clavering were in the habit of putting on a rich golden tinge, which became them both wonderfully. The upper windows of the great house flamed so as to make your eyes wink ; the little river ran off noisily westward, and was lost in a sombre wood, behind which the towers of the old abbey church of Clavering (whereby that town is called Clavering St. Mary's to the present day) rose up in purple splendour. Little Arthur's figure and his mother's cast long blue shadows over the grass ; and he would repeat in a low voice (for a scene of great natural beauty always moved the boy, who inherited this sensibility from his mother) certain lines beginning, ' These are thy glorious works, Parent of Good ; Almighty ! thine this universal frame,' greatly to Mrs. Pendennis's delight. Such walks and conversation generally ended in a profusion of filial and maternal embraces ; for to love and to pray were the main occupations of this dear woman's

life; and I have often heard Pendennis say, in his wild way, that he felt that he was sure of going to heaven, for his mother never could be happy there without him.<sup>29</sup>

Pen's worship of his mother is untinged by any doubt or criticism. "During his childhood and youth," Thackeray tells us, "the boy thought of her as little less than an angel—a supernatural being, all wisdom, love, and beauty."<sup>30</sup>

Yet Thackeray does not conceal the dangers of uncritical mutual love between mother and son. Helen Pendennis gives Pen an absurdly exaggerated conception of his talents and importance. She is beyond reason reluctant to lose "her son, and that anxious hold she has had of him, as long as he has remained in the mother's nest."<sup>31</sup> When her ward Laura refuses the proposal of marriage that Pen, from a sense of duty rather than from love, has made to her, Helen is most unfairly angry with her, because she sees in the marriage a way of keeping her son at home. Both in his own person and through the comments of other characters Thackeray points out how her cherishing fondness unfits Pen for the world. Major Pendennis bluntly remarks that "The mother has spoiled the young rascal . . . with her cursed sentimentality and romantic rubbish";<sup>32</sup> and Helen's neighbors freely disparage "her pride and absurd infatuation about that boy."<sup>33</sup>

Despite Helen's foolishness and weakness, Thackeray remains unshaken in his loyalty to her during the first half of the novel. Again and again the reader encounters unmeasured praise of women of her sort, "in whose angelical natures," Thackeray says, in a typical passage, "there is something awful as well as beautiful, to contemplate; at whose feet the wildest and fiercest of us must fall down and humble ourselves, in admiration of that adorable purity which never seems to do or to think wrong."<sup>34</sup>

#### IV

Only in chapters fifty to fifty-seven does the change of perspective that I have mentioned begin to operate. By this time Pen's development is substantially over. He has become in effect a projection of Thackeray himself in mature life. Consequently, his current attitude towards his mother, as towards other persons then of central importance to him, finds immediate expression in his novel. "If the secret history of books could be written," he observes in this part of *Pendennis*, "and the author's private thoughts and meanings noted down alongside of

his story, how many insipid volumes would become interesting, and dull tales excite the reader !"<sup>35</sup> Let us examine the "private thoughts and meanings" latent in the part Helen plays in the episode of the novel that concerns Fanny Bolton.

Of this episode generally I shall say very little, since I intend to discuss it in connection with Thackeray's relationship to the Brookfields in chapter six.<sup>36</sup> It will suffice to recall that Fanny is a girl of the servant class with whom Pen is for a time infatuated. He breaks with her, only to fall ill of a fever ; and she nurses him until his mother and Laura Bell can be summoned to London. When these ladies arrive, they dismiss Fanny at once, taking it for granted that she is Pen's mistress ; and in the sequel Helen's jealous affection, which Laura entirely shares, leads her to suppress a letter that poor Fanny has written to Pen.

When Thackeray sent these chapters to Mrs. Brookfield, he remarked, "It seems to me to be a good comedy. My mother would have acted in just such a way if I had run away with a naughty woman."<sup>37</sup> This was not mere surmise. In 1856 Thackeray found it necessary to apologize to his friend Mrs. Sartoris for the freedom with which he had spoken of the domestic misfortunes of her sister Fanny Kemble, who had long since separated from her husband Pierce Butler :

I heard and saw from your own behaviour, [he wrote] how much grieved and hurt you were at what I said, and think now your offence was quite natural though I meant none when I spoke—only a burst of indignation carried me off—and that I believe, as I think of it now, was not caused by your sister so much as by some private wrongs of my own. Whether rightly or wrongly, there certainly are statements in Butler's pamphlet to the effect that he was accused of being improperly fond of his children's governess. My relations some 7 or 8 years ago accused me too (no didn't accuse, only insinuated) that I had cast unlawful eyes on a Governess—the story of Jane Eyre, seduction, surreptitious family in the Regent's Park, &c., which you may or mayn't have heard, all grow out of this confounded tradition—and as I never spoke 3 words to the lady and had no more love for my Governess than for my grandmother, and as the calumny has been the cause of a never-quite-mended quarrel and of the cruellest torture and annoyance to me, whenever I hear of poor gentlemen and poor governesses accused of this easy charge, I become wild and speak more no doubt from a sense of my own wrongs than their's.<sup>38</sup>

The information that this letter supplies is corroborated by a passage in Lady Eastlake's notorious *Quarterly Review* article on *Vanity Fair* and *Jane Eyre* published eight years earlier. It is here noted that Currer Bell's dedication of the second edition of *Jane Eyre* to Thackeray had given rise to "various rumours, more or less romantic . . . For example, Jane Eyre is sentimentally assumed to have proceeded from the pen of Mr. Thackeray's governess, whom he had himself chosen as his model for Becky,

and who, in mingled love and revenge, personified him in return as Mr. Rochester."<sup>39</sup>

How deeply Thackeray was hurt by this groundless scandal, which attached itself to one of the series of governesses who taught his two daughters,<sup>40</sup> and in particular by his mother's willingness to credit it, is revealed in chapter fifty-seven of his novel. Here Pen turns on his mother and denounces her meddling interference in a scene which occupies the same place in his portrait of Helen as does Dobbin's a raignment of Amelia at the end of *Vanity Fair* in the portrait of Thackeray's earlier heroine.

It was evening before Helen and Laura came into the sitting-room to join the company there. She came in leaning on Laura, with her back to the waning light, so that Arthur could not see how pallid and woo-stricken her face was, and as she went up to Pen, whom she had not seen during the day, and placed her fond arms on his shoulder and kissed him tenderly, Laura left her, and moved away to another part of the room. Pen remarked that his mother's voice and and her whole frame trembled, her hand was clammy cold as she put it up to his forehead, piteously embracing him. The spectacle of her misery only added, somehow, to the wrath and tastiness of the young man. He scarcely returned the kiss which the suffering lady gave him: and the countenance with which he met the appeal of her look was hard and cruel. 'She persecutes me,' he thought within himself, 'and she comes to me with the air of a martyr.' 'You look very ill, my child,' she said. 'I don't like to see you look in that way.' And she tottered to a sofa, still holding one of his passive hands in her thin, cold, clinging fingers.

'I have had much to annoy me, mother,' Pen said, with a throbbing breast: and as he spoke Helen's heart began to beat so, that she sat almost dead and speechless with terror.

Warrington, Laura, and Major Pendennis, all remained breathless, aware that the storm was about to break.

'I have had letters from London,' Arthur continued, 'and one that has given me more pain than I ever had in my life. It tells me that former letters of mine have been intercepted and purloined away from me;—that—that a young creature who has shown the greatest love and care for me, has been most cruelly used by—by you, mother.'

'For God's sake, stop,' cried out Warrington. 'She's ill—don't you see she is ill?'

'Let him go on,' said the widow faintly.

'Let him go on and kill her,' said Laura, rushing up to her mother's side.

'Speak on, sir, and see her die.'

'It is you who are cruel,' cried Pen, more exasperated and more savage, because his own heart, naturally soft and weak, revolted indignantly at the injustice of the very suffering which was laid at his door. 'It is you that are cruel, who attribute all this pain to me: it is you who are cruel with your wicked reproaches, your wicked doubts of me, your wicked persecutions of those who love me,—yes, those who love me, and who brave everything for me, and whom you despise and trample upon because they are of lower degree than you. Shall I tell you what I will do—what I am resolved to do, now that I know what your conduct has been?—I will go back to this poor girl whom you turned out of my doors, and ask her to come back and share my home with me. I'll defy the pride which persecutes her and the pitiless suspicion which insults her and me.'<sup>41</sup>

But Thackeray does not end his portrait of Helen on this note of justified severity. As the scene develops, Pen is reconciled to



his mother ; and in describing her death, which follows almost immediately, Thackeray returns to the attitude towards her that he had displayed in the earlier part of his novel. "The sainted woman was dead," he writes. "The last emotion of her soul here was joy, to be henceforth unchequered and eternal. The tender heart beat no more ; and it was to have no more pangs, no more doubts, no more griefs and trials. Its last throb was love : and Helen's last breath was a benediction."<sup>42</sup>

Thackeray drew Mrs. Pendennis with the sympathetic insight that he had shown in portraying Amelia in *Vanity Fair*. What he says about her often seems overstrained ; but he does not allow his fondness for her to prevent him from presenting her in the round, from showing her faults as well as her virtues. Indeed, Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth was by no means pleased with his candor. Reporting that his daughter Anne had said to him, "O how like Granny is to Mrs. Pendennis Papa," Thackeray remarked : "Granny is mighty angry that I should think no better of her than that."<sup>43</sup>

## V

Thackeray's contemporaries were not aware of any incongruity between what Thackeray shows Mrs. Pendennis to be and what he sometimes says about her. They accepted her—as they did his very similar portrait of Laura—at Thackeray's own valuation. The early reviewers of *Pendennis* were united in their admiration of both ladies. Thomas Hood sums up their response, when he inquires : "What can we do but simply bow down reverently before the goodness and sweetness of Helen Pendennis, and the wisdom and womanhood of Laura ?"<sup>44</sup>

By the end of the century, however, Mrs. Pendennis and Laura, like Amelia, had fallen from favor ; and Thackeray's unduly high estimate of them was frequently made a ground of complaint against him. This reaction has been intensified in our own time.<sup>45</sup> Miss Elizabeth Drew, for example, considers that

The whole attitude of Mrs. Pendennis—an attitude not by any means confined to Victorian mothers—gave an opportunity for a magnificent satiric effect, but Thackeray is afraid of his public and prefers to praise Mrs. Pendennis fulsomely for her maternal devotion, instead of satirizing her unmercifully for the form it takes.<sup>46</sup>

It will be observed that Miss Drew does not question the effectiveness of Thackeray's characterization. Admitting this, she doubts only his judgment of Helen. She wants him to take the same view of her as, let us say, Sidney Howard does of Mrs. Phelps, the ghastly maternal vampire of *The Silver Cord*.

Such a demand reveals a basic incomprehension of the nature of Thackeray's art, which derives in turn from an inability to consider the literature of the past except in terms of modern attitudes. Miss Drew fails to see that Thackeray is presenting a normal relationship—heightened, no doubt, by the extreme emotional sensitivity of the two characters involved—, not a pathological case history. She does not realize that in picturing such a situation sympathy will take him nearer the truth than satire. Again Miss Drew is so determined to find evidences of a modern mind in Thackeray that, when he fails to take her view of Helen, she can only explain his aberration by implying that he has been guilty of a cowardly concession to Victorian prejudice. We have seen that his estimate of Helen is rather to be referred to her origin in Thackeray's personal life, to the emotional ties that made inevitable his efforts to palliate her shortcomings.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PENDENNIS: MAJOR PENDENNIS

#### I

Following the plan employed with *Vanity Fair*, the comparison of Thackeray's portrait of Amelia with those of Miss Crawley and Jos Sedley, I propose in this chapter to consider in relation to his "original" in Thackeray's life a character in *Pendennis* who, unlike Mrs. Pendennis, has claimed both Victorian and modern suffrages. This is Major Pendennis. The place he has continued to hold in the esteem of Thackeray's readers, is summed up in Charles Whibley's study of 1903, the first comprehensive account of Thackeray's work to reflect the shift from Victorian to modern taste. Whibley could hardly find words severe enough for Mrs. Pendennis and Laura. "They suggest nothing save dulness and insipidity," he writes. "They are not so much women as bottles of tears, reverberating phonographs of sobs."<sup>1</sup> Major Pendennis, on the other hand, seemed to him "the most vital, as he is the most entertaining, figure in the book."<sup>2</sup>

Thackeray nowhere identifies Major Pendennis's "original," yet it may be readily demonstrated that the Major too was drawn from life. Let us first note the few details that we are given of his career anterior to the opening of *Pendennis*. Thackeray tells us that he was sent out to India in early youth as a penniless lieutenant;<sup>3</sup> that he saw much service there, some of it apparently in the capacity of a superior military magistrate (the adventurer Altamont, who had known him in India, is afraid of him and calls him "Captain Beak");<sup>4</sup> that he rose to be "secretary to Lord Buckley, when commander-in-chief";<sup>5</sup> that he returned to England by the Cape of Good Hope in 1806;<sup>6</sup> and that he served in the ill-fated Walcheren campaign of 1809-1810.<sup>7</sup> We learn nothing of his employments after his settlement in Regency London. But we are informed that he was freely admitted to the society "of the great George, of the Royal Dukes, of the statesmen, beauties, and fashionable ladies of the day";<sup>8</sup> that he was favored by the Duke of Wellington;<sup>9</sup> that the Duke

of York was his particular patron and friend;<sup>10</sup> and that Lord Yarmouth, John Wilson Croker, and Theodore Hook were his intimate associates.<sup>11</sup> A bachelor living in lodgings, he makes himself a power in several London clubs, including one in Pall Mall, where "As he was one of the finest judges of wine in England, and a man of active, dominating, and inquiring spirit, he had been very properly chosen to be a member of the Committee . . . , and indeed was almost the manager of the institution; and the stewards and waiters bowed before him as reverentially as to a Duke or a Field Marshall."<sup>12</sup>

Since *Pendennis* is a semi-autobiographical novel, it is also pertinent to consider the Major's connection with his nephew Pen, in whom Thackeray drew a partial self-portrait. He is Pen's "selfish old Mentor,"<sup>13</sup> who seeks by his worldly counsels to form the young man into a pattern Regency gentleman. He introduces Pen to society and teaches him its customs and usages. And Pen learns from him a thousand legends and scandals of the London world.

Now, among Thackeray's associates in the later eighteenth-thirties there was a man whose history was precisely that assigned to Major Pendennis in Thackeray's novel, and who played much the same role in Thackeray's life as the Major does in Pen's. This was Lt. Colonel Merrick Shawe, Thackeray's uncle by marriage. How exactly he resembled Major Pendennis may be seen from a sketch of his history, a sketch derived, it may be mentioned in passing, almost entirely from manuscript sources in the British Museum, the Public Record Office, and the Genealogical Office at Dublin Castle.

## II

The Shawes came to Ireland from Chester in the seventeenth century.<sup>14</sup> The first of the clan about whom precise information is obtainable was the Rev. Fielding Shawe, D. D., who was born in 1659 and died in 1728. He married Jane Harte, a niece of John Vesey, Archbishop of Tuam, and had eight children by her. His second son, Merrick Shawe, born 1692, graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, in 1709, and, settling at Mulpit, Galway, became Rector of Athenny. Merrick Shawe had five children. His two younger sons, Merrick and Robert, went into the army, possibly through the interest of their cousins Thomas and Henry Shawe, who were also infantry officers. Merrick was a Captain when he died in the West Indies in 1789, and Robert survived till 1811, dying a Brigadier General. The Rev. Merrick Shawe's

older son, Matthew, who was born about 1736, became a barrister and settled at Lodge, county Galway.

It is with Matthew's family that we are concerned. He first married Jane, daughter of Patrick Fersse, of nearby Spring Garden. Fersse was a wealthy man by the standards of rural Ireland; and his daughter was known among the Shawes, who belonged to the lesser Anglo-Irish gentry, as the "Countess."<sup>15</sup> Matthew had one son by her, Merrick, born—it would appear—in the early seventeen-seventies. After her death Matthew married Mary, daughter of Peter Moore, of Castle Pollard, county Meath, who bore him four boys and four girls. This large family grew up in entire harmony at Lodge, the father acting as his children's tutor, and Merrick taking a benevolent interest in his younger half-brothers and half-sisters.

As Merrick approached manhood, he found a patron in Colonel William Trench of Corbally Park, with whom he went hunting;<sup>16</sup> and he was commissioned an Ensign in the first Connaught Regiment of Fencibles.<sup>17</sup> But he was an exceptionally bright and alert lad, and his talents were clearly wasted in the Galway countryside. He welcomed the proposal of his uncle Robert, a Captain in His Majesty's 76th Foot, that he join that regiment as an Ensign. His father wrote to Robert on 7 May 1789:

Merrick is Very Much Obliged to you for thinking of him. Nothing woud Give him greater pleasure than to Join you in India. And if a Vacancy happens I hope you will be able to Get Lord Cornwallis and Col. Musgrave to recommend him in wh. Case I have hope for Success- As for purchasing for him that is out of my power for the 500£ wch. was his poor Mothers fortune is by Settlement on the Estate of Spring-Garden, & cannot be touched till he is of age. Nor then I fear without a Lawsuit. . . . Merrick is Very Clever at Figures is a Good Latin & French scholar & knows some Italian Rides & Dances perfectly well.<sup>18</sup>

Earl Cornwallis and Sir Thomas Musgrave respectively, Commander-in-Chief of the Indian army and commanding officer of the 76th Foot, approved Robert Shawe's proposal; and Merrick Shawe was instructed to come out to India. The sale of his Irish commission brought him enough money for his wardrobe and travelling expenses; and friends came to his assistance. "Fersse gave him 5 Guineas wch. is more than I Expected as he is a Great Miser," wrote his father. "His friend Coll Trench yesterday put a paper with Ten Guineas into his hand with a memorandum to Bye him some feathers fitt for Fishing."<sup>19</sup> By March of 1790 he had said goodbye to his many relations and was on his way to London.

He sailed for India aboard the *Hawke* and by November was

in Calcutta. In April of 1791 his father noted the arrival at Lodge of his first letter from the east, "which has made a Holly-day as he is a Great Favorite."<sup>20</sup> For three months Shawe served with the 73rd Foot, but on 19 January 1790 the expected vacancy in the 76th occurred, and he joined that regiment. The 76th saw no action during this year, but in 1791 and 1792 it had a leading part in the Mysore War. Shawe participated in the siege and assault of the fortified town of Bangalore in March, 1791. He fought against Tippu Sultan's forces at Seringapatam in May, and experienced the retreat, complicated by disease and famine, which followed that engagement. In December he was one of the detachment that captured Savandroog, "the Hill of Death." In February, 1792 he was severely wounded in Cornwallis's great victory at Seringapatam. Though the engagement brought him a lieutenant, *vice* E. Brooke, killed in action, he henceforth carried a bullet in his shoulder.<sup>21</sup>

During the next seven years, while the 76th Foot had garrison duty at Fort William, he acquired a knowledge of British India that made him widely respected and displayed marked business capacities. Some time before 1799 he became Adjutant of the Calcutta Militia. He must have given great satisfaction in this post, for his brother officers banded together in that year to present him with "a sword and the price of a company."<sup>22</sup> His captaincy was dated from 26 May, 1800.<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile, sad news had reached him from Ireland. His father had been much shaken by reading his name in the list of casualties at Seringapatam.<sup>24</sup> Two years later Matthew Shawe complained that his sight was failing, though he was still able to teach Merrick's half-brothers. "I have so often read the Classicks," he explained, "They are quite familiar."<sup>25</sup> A premonition that his end was near led him to add: "If it did no harm to your Interest I could wish to see you before I Die."<sup>26</sup> Upon his demise in 1796 Merrick, who cannot have been more than twenty-five, became head of the family. He made his stepmother and sisters an allowance, and later obtained commissions in the army for three of his half-brothers.

On 17 June 1799 General St. Leger asked Shawe to become his A. D. C., remarking, "I am certain that I shall receive great advantage from your knowledge and experience of India."<sup>27</sup> This was a flattering offer, as a common friend pointed out, for the advantages of joining St. Leger's "family" were substantial.<sup>28</sup> Shawe nevertheless declined it. Even brighter prospects were opening out before him. His superiors in the Calcutta Militia,

he told St. Leger, "wrote to Lord Mornington in my favor at a time when it was believed I should accompany my regt. to the coast on Service—and his Lordship's answer implied a wish that I should not leave the Corps."<sup>29</sup> Lord Mornington was the Governor-General of India. At the end of 1799 Shawe joined his staff.<sup>30</sup> This was the critical step of his life.

### III

For the next thirty-five years Shawe's fortunes were linked with those of Marquess Wellesley, as Lord Mornington became in 1800. Between 1799 and 1805 Shawe served Wellesley successively as A. D. C., Military Secretary, and Private Secretary.<sup>31</sup> In the last post, which he occupied for nearly three years, Shawe was the Marquess's principal man of business; and the Wellesley papers in the British Museum include dozens of volumes of the correspondence which he received and answered. These documents show him to have been a most discreet, orderly, and indefatigable subordinate, with a remarkable head for detail. In a word, he was worthy of a master who has long been recognized as one of the great administrators of English history.

Wellesley earned this reputation by his Governor-Generalship. Born in 1760, and educated at Eton and Oxford, he had succeeded to his father's Irish peerage when he was barely twenty-one. For a time he devoted himself chiefly to the interests of his family, which included three brothers who were themselves to rise to the peerage. In 1786 he entered parliament, where talent and influential connections brought him a success that led to his Indian appointment. As Governor-General he found scope for abilities hitherto hidden. When Shawe joined his staff, he had already achieved the conquest of Mysore, the first of the series of brilliant transactions that marked his proconsulship. Shawe attributed Wellesley's accomplishments primarily to his keen judgment and comprehensive mental grasp. "[He is] his own Secretary at War," Shawe noted, "his own minister of foreign relations, his own master General of ordnance, and his own Chancellor of Exchequer . . . There is no clashing of Departments, nor is anything left to chance."<sup>32</sup>

Personally Wellesley was autocratic and masterful in the extreme. He was impatient of opposition and arbitrary in overruling his critics. He felt that Sir John Shore, his predecessor as Governor-General, had shamefully degraded the dignity of the government by living on terms of intimacy with the civil

servants of the East India Company. Both temperament and policy caused Wellesley to hold himself aloof from Calcutta society. So ceremonious was the respect he demanded from his "subjects," that even his friends were moved to protest. They pointed out that George the Third himself asked less of his courtiers. "Then the King is wrong," Wellesley replied, "but that is no reason why I should improperly relax also."<sup>33</sup> His imperious stiffness made him exceedingly unpopular. The "old Civilians" are bitterly offended, Shawe told Henry Wellesley, the Marquess's brother, after the latter's return to England in 1803. They are "the vainest class of people in the world" and "have hitherto considered themselves the most enlightened and the most polished *Gentlemen* in the universe." They complain, Shawe continues, because the Governor-General will not don a white waistcoat and congee cap, smoke a hookah, and invite them to Government House; but "you know that it was impossible for a man of Lord Wellesley's Rank manners & education to like the people of the Bengal Service." The good opinion of "the *grandees* of Calcutta" could easily be obtained by a month of dinners and the expenditure of "about two chests of Claret," but it is not worth the purchase. "All Jacobins & all Rogues would still hate him & will continue to do so to the end of time."<sup>34</sup>

During his first months in India Wellesley seems to have displayed an almost equal hauteur towards his staff. He had left his family in England, and on 21 February 1799 he wrote to Lord Grenville from Madras of his "magnificent solitude where I stalk about like a Royal Tiger without even a friendly jackall to soothe the severity of my thoughts."<sup>35</sup> On settling in Calcutta, however, he admitted his subordinates to a friendship which he denied the outside world. Among them he revealed himself to be the most polished and gracious of *grands seigneurs*. "When Lord Wellesley is well & not annoyed," Shawe wrote to Henry Wellesley, describing the amusements of the Governor-General and his bachelor associates at Barrackpore in the summer of 1803, "you know how lightly business sits on him."<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Shawe continued, so great is the intimacy which Wellesley allows his staff, that Calcutta gossip accuses him, Captain Sydenham, Colonel Harcourt and the rest

of having withdrawn ourselves from Society from motives of Contempt for the *respectable inhabitants* of this great City and from Sentiments of inordinate pride which has no other foundation than the favour and indulgence of Lord Wellesley, which is said to have spoiled us, and to have made us forgetful of what we are.<sup>37</sup>



Where Wellesley was concerned, Shawe never forgot what he was. He reports the state of the Marquess's health and the alterations in his temper with all the reverent minuteness of Saint-Simon recording the personal habits of Louis XIV. His references to his patron invariably breathe admiration and awe. Observe him admonishing a correspondent who has allowed himself angry outbursts in official letters: "It is not always in my power to exercise my own discretion on any paper that is sent to me. If I receive it in *the presence* the paper must be seen."<sup>38</sup> Yet Shawe never seems fulsome or insincere, because he obviously regards the difference in rank between himself and Wellesley as part of the nature of things and behaves accordingly. We find him honestly delighted in a situation that would have tried the patience of a less confirmed worshipper; having brought his half-sister Jane to Bengal in 1803, he wrote to her mother:

She is a great favorite of Lord Wellesley who is pleased with her good Nature and never misses an opportunity of extracting from her (in spite of my efforts to the contrary) Irish anecdotes of Lodge &c. &c. for which I am afterwards quizzed unmercifully.<sup>39</sup>

But there was nothing malicious in Wellesley's quizzing; he felt an esteem for Shawe which was based on real liking and respect. Shawe's private correspondence sufficiently testifies that he was an amusing companion as well as an acute man of business. His gift for lively social observation is illustrated in his letters to Henry Wellesley. He tells how a military review has gone off "with great success in spite of a very heavy fog which dissolved Colonel Green's rouge."<sup>40</sup> He describes "Captain Daniel's marriage with Miss Thorne—Sydenham & I arrived from Barrackpore just in time to see Lady Anstruther throw a glass of water in the Bride's face at the close of the ceremony to prevent her from fainting. I believe she wasted her water very unnecessarily."<sup>41</sup> He has a good deal to say about George Barlow, whom the Court of Directors had designated to succeed Wellesley as Governor-General. Shawe deplored the appointment, thinking it unwise to choose a Governor-General "from the bosom of the Civil Service";<sup>42</sup> and he foresaw trouble when Barlow's wife became the first lady of British India. "He will find it an arduous task to maintain an appearance of dignity while she is swiping around the Government House."<sup>43</sup> Mrs. Barlow was constantly quarrelling with Lady Anstruther and Lady Russell, who regarded her as an upstart. "Mr. B. is even now not quite neutral in the wars between the females," Shawe

wrote, "and he has a special hatred of Lady A. He complained bitterly to Lord Wellesley lately of her having forced him to carve a Turkey. Whoever beholds the next administration in India will have some amusement."<sup>44</sup> One understands how the Duke of Wellington was later able to recommend Shawe and his friend Sydenham to the Duke of Richmond, who was looking for a private secretary, as "most gentlemanlike men, well informed and complete men of business as well as pleasant men in society."<sup>45</sup>

Shawe had met Colonel Arthur Wellesley, the Marquess's younger brother and later the Duke of Wellington, not long after the latter's arrival in India in 1798. Shawe was at once impressed by the fashion in which, "before he was in command, his critical study of his profession afforded a marked contrast to the general habits of that time and country."<sup>46</sup> A story that Shawe told John Wilson Croker to illustrate Wellington's concentration upon military matters may be cited as evidence of the two men's early friendship.

The Duke inherits his father's musical taste [Shawe related], and used to play very well, and rather too much, on the violin. Some circumstances occurred which made him reflect that this was not a soldierly accomplishment, and took up too much of his time and thoughts, and he burned his fiddles, and never played again. About the same time he gave up the habit of card playing.<sup>47</sup>

During Wellesley's great campaigns against the Marathas, he preferred to correspond with Shawe rather than directly with the Governor-General. He candidly explained to his brother, when the latter betrayed annoyance at this arrangement, that Shawe always answered him and that his replies usually contained helpful information about affairs at the Bengal Presidency.<sup>48</sup> The friendship continued throughout Shawe's life; and after his return to England, he was a useful intermediary during the coolnesses that not infrequently existed between the two brothers.

The preferment that Shawe received from Wellesley raised the penniless ensign of 1790 to an affluence of which he had never dreamed. Not only was he able to discharge most liberally his obligations towards his family in Ireland, he also advanced his own career in a fashion that might have been envied by the younger son of a ducal house. In the summer of 1803 he was negotiating simultaneously for his majority, which was to cost him £4,600—"Being so low down," he explained to his uncle Robert, "it [is] worth my while to give a long price"—<sup>49</sup> and for his lieutenant-colonelcy. "I shall never again enjoy such an office as that which I now hold," he wrote in October of the same year. "If I should remain another year in India my

Treasury would contain four or five thousand pounds after paying for my Lieutt. Coloneley.”<sup>50</sup> When in December he at last sent the feathers he had promised fourteen years before to his early patron Colonel Trench, who had emerged from recent wholesale creations of Irish peers as Viscount Dunlo and Earl of Clancarty, he remarked that “Lord Wellesley’s extraordinary Kindness has opened to me the prospect of becoming a *Comfortable Freeholder* in the County of Galway at no very distant period when Lord Dunlo may reckon on one more steady voter.”<sup>51</sup> By August 1805, when he sailed for home with Lord Wellesley, his exchequer must have been full indeed.

#### IV

Arriving in England in January, 1806, after a long voyage around the Cape of Good Hope, Shawe found himself placed on half-pay. “Applied for employment immediately,” he noted in his statement of services. “Served as Assistant Adjutant General in Ireland during 1806, but having repeated my application for active service was appointed to the Fifth Garrison Battalion.”<sup>52</sup> He held this post, the duties of which were not arduous, for nearly three years.

Meanwhile, he remained closely associated with Wellesley. England was not merely indifferent to the Marquess’s Indian achievements, she seemed actually to resent them. George the Third had prophesied, while Wellesley was still in India, that “when he returns his head will be quite turned, and there will be no enduring him.”<sup>53</sup> The *Creevey Papers* further illustrate the hostility with which the Wellesleys were regarded by their political enemies. In 1808 Samuel Whitbread was “not sorry to see the Wellesley pride a little lowered”; Cobbett in the same year spoke of “the arrogance of that damned infernal family”; and in 1810 Lord Milton described the Marquess as “a great calamity inflicted upon England.”<sup>54</sup> For two years Wellesley’s régime as Governor-General was subjected to Parliamentary scrutiny. Shawe helped him to prepare his papers for this ordeal,<sup>55</sup> and remained Wellesley’s confidant while it continued.

On 7 February 1809 Shawe at last was restored to active service, being transferred from the half-pay of the 5th Garrison Battalion to the Lieutenant-Coloneley of his old regiment. The major event during his command of the 76th Foot was Lieutenant-General Chatham’s ill-fated campaign against enemy shipping and installations at Flushing, and Walcheren. The 76th took

part in the siege of Flushing in July and August of 1809<sup>56</sup> and was one of the regiments left behind to garrison Walcheren Island when General Chatham withdrew his main force in September. Fever overtook the regiment there, and by November 539 of its 646 men and officers had been invalided home. On 10 May 1810 Shawe retired from the army by selling his commission, after seeing the last of his regiment out of Walcheren.<sup>57</sup>

Uncertain health may have caused Shawe to give up the army. He had three months' sick leave in 1810, the first during his twenty-two years of service;<sup>58</sup> and he can hardly have escaped from Walcheren untouched by fever. But another motive was certainly his desire to free himself from all obligations except those to Wellesley, who re-entered political life after parliament vindicated his proconsulship in 1808. Wellesley served as Ambassador to the Central Junta of Spain in 1809 and upon his return to England in December of that year became Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. A long memorandum which Shawe drew up at St. Jean de Luz in 1814 shows that he was Wellesley's closest confidant and customary companion during the three years that the Marquess held this office. Long service had given Shawe privileges that he would not have thought of claiming in India.

I have often ventured to tell Lord Wellesley [he wrote], when he complained of the stories told of him, that if he would live as other people, dine out, go to the opera, and mix with the world, they would not accuse him of keeping bad company when he was passing a quiet evening at home; and further, that if he would give his opinions fair play, by meeting his parliamentary and other friends often at his own table or theirs, and employing one-half the eloquence thrown away upon Sydenham, Smith, and me, in stating and enforcing his own view of public affairs, he would lead the country in spite of twenty such Juntas as were opposed to him.<sup>59</sup>

But Wellesley's vanity and autocratic temper, intensified by his Indian experience of supreme power, had unfitted him for the rough-and-tumble of English party politics; and he found it impossible to follow Shawe's judicious counsel. In 1812 a sharp disagreement with his colleagues led to his resignation. When he failed to justify his withdrawal from the Cabinet to an expectant House of Lords, Canning told him "that he had walked into the House the greatest man in England, and had walked out the least."<sup>60</sup> The Prince Regent nevertheless directed him to form a coalition ministry after Perceval's assassination a few weeks later; but Wellesley had shortly to abandon this commission, finding himself unable to obtain the necessary co-operation. Wellesley's last opportunity of playing a leading role in English

public life having thus slipped through his fingers, Shawe had perforce to seek employment elsewhere.

During most of the Regency Shawe served at the Horse Guards on the staff of the Duke of York, in whom also he found a personal friend.<sup>61</sup> He evidently occupied a position of considerable responsibility, for on 3 April 1815 we find him writing an official letter to Wellington "in the absence of Major-General Sir Henry Torrens," Military Secretary to the Commander-in-Chief.<sup>62</sup> On 1 November 1818 Wellesley asked him to intercede with Torrens for a friend, and 22 July 1819 Wellesley again asked his help with "the Duke of York through Torrens."<sup>63</sup> Late in 1819 Shawe left the Horse Guards to become a Commissioner of Stamps. The post was worth £1,000 a year; and since he was also a resident director of the United Empire Assurance Company, a "situation . . . the income & advantages of which may be estimated at the least at £200 a year,"<sup>64</sup> he was apparently snugly placed for life. But, as we shall see, he retained his Commissionership only until 1823.<sup>65</sup>

Throughout these years Shawe enjoyed a very considerable social position. An urbane and polished officer and man of affairs, closely affiliated with such grandees as the Duke of York, Wellesley, and Wellington, he knew everyone and went where he pleased in the Regency world. In 1811 he visited the Prince Regent at Oatlands with Wellesley, and found George's favorite Lord Yarmouth most confidential.<sup>66</sup> On 12 June 1821 we find him dining with John Wilson Croker in a party that included Lord Yarmouth, Lord Lowther, Sydney Smith, and Theodore Hook.<sup>67</sup> On 14 December 1822 he wrote Wellesley giving an account of his recent activities. Before leaving London he had dined with Lord Sidmouth and seen Lord Holland. Some weeks at great houses in Essex, Cambridgeshire, Wiltshire, and Hampshire, had terminated in visits to the Duke of Grafton at Wakefield Lodge and to Cosgrove Priory, Stoney Stratford, where, Shawe laments, "the frost has spoiled our hunting."<sup>68</sup> These occasional glimpses of him in the surviving records of the age may be presumed to afford a fair sample of the company that he kept.

Shawe also played his part in encouraging the establishment of West End clubs, which was so significant a feature of the social life of this period. He was a founding member of both the Travellers' and the senior United Service, and he served on the committee of the former club during the first three years of its existence.<sup>69</sup> The Travellers', it should be pointed out, is the

scene of the first chapter of *Pendennis*; indeed, the exact position of Major Pendennis's breakfast table, "by the fire, and yet near the window,"<sup>70</sup> can still be located in the morning room as the dining room of the club's early years has since become.

Shawe's closest intimates remained Lord Wellesley and his associates, particularly Sydenham and Charles Culley Smith, who had married Wellesley's sister, the former Lady Anne Wellesley. Wellesley's letters to Shawe provide glimpses of this circle and Shawe's place in it. Some of them are concerned with hunting, a pastime in which Shawe was an expert and Wellesley an amateur. On 1 November 1818 Wellesley wrote from Winchfield: "I have had some sport here notwithstanding the Warden's restrictions: he is as incomprehensible, as the Hindu mythology. *Syd the Sportsman* became a good shot by sudden inspiration; he cannot boast too much of his performance for a first day: I am toddling on, and if I should live to the age of Methusalem, may hope to be a tolerable shot on the morning previous to my demise."<sup>71</sup> On 22 July of the following year Wellesley sent Shawe from Belmont House an account of the amusements which the latter's illness prevented him from enjoying:

At this place, I take a great deal of exercise, firing at gulls among the rocks, at Pigeons, &c. & stumping up hills on a poney. Yesterday we passed with the Great Rollo, shooting at Rabbits in the morning, & then dining on Turbot, Venison, cum Claret, Champagne, Ice, Pines, peaches, nectarines, Apricots, &c. I am such a favorite that he put a haunch of Venison in the Boot of the carriage, as a practical joke. Edward desires to be kindly remembered to you, he shot a couple of Rollac rabbits running, his Irish boy, being asked what sport we had, said, 'We killed nine rabbits, & one of them was a Loveret.' Your friend Cornish dined at Rolfe's & seemed much amused at the riot, which was enormous & much increased by Sandby, who is here with Edward, & who turned out with a great paradox, & was hunted full cry for an hour.<sup>72</sup>

Another of Wellesley's letters testifies to the excellence of Shawe's palate. "My Dear Colonel," Wellesley wrote to him on 12 October 1814, "you are covered with glory—your partridges were the best I have eaten this season, your pudding in the belly answered admirably, and your *claret* (which arrived with *the birds*) is the finest I ever tasted." After a series of questions, in which Wellesley respectfully defers to Shawe's authority, he is requested to provide the Marquess with as much of this wine as he can, "even to the extent of six Hogsheads."<sup>73</sup>

Not all of Wellesley's tastes were so innocent. His private life had always been irregular. He had five illegitimate children by Hyacinthe Gabrielle Roland before he made her lady Mornington in 1794; and after he returned from India, he lived almost

entirely apart from his wife. Creevey wrote in 1810 of Wellesley's "profligate establishment" and his "*Cyprian*" named "Poll Raffle."<sup>74</sup> The only illustration that this aspect of Wellesley's character receives in his correspondence with Shawe is a cryptic note from Richmond of 18 April 1818, which can hardly be dismissed, however, as amounting to no more than Mr. Pickwick's "chops and tomata sauce."

My Dear Colonel,

I have heard nothing from Lightfoot for some days. Pray let me know, what you are doing. The arrangements which I mentioned are now become very pressing both here & at Ramsgate. Ever yours

W.

Finely confused & charmingly alarming proceedings for Legitimate Roguery — Illicit love seems to be the safest & most moral course.<sup>75</sup>

Shawe's correspondence has about it an air of decorousness which makes one wonder if he was entirely at ease playing Leporello to this Don Juan of fifty-seven. But no doubt the Marquess's quality reconciled him to everything.

## V

In 1822 Wellesley, who had returned to public life as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland the year before, pressed Shawe to rejoin his staff.<sup>76</sup> Shawe was loath to give up his seat at the Board of Stamps, though glad to serve as his patron's confidential representative in England.<sup>77</sup> Wellesley persisted, however; and on 28 July 1823 Shawe wrote to Charles Arbuthnot, joint-secretary of the Treasury under Lord Liverpool, declaring his willingness to serve the Marquess, but adding: "at my time of life (which has chiefly been a life of toil & confinement) I trust I shall not be deemed unreasonable in wishing to reserve the option of office or a Pension."<sup>78</sup> It was arranged that he should be paid a pension of £1,000 (half on the English and half on the Irish establishment) when he ceased to hold the office of private secretary to the Lord Lieutenant (a post worth £927) or one of equivalent value.<sup>79</sup>

Shawe remained in Ireland with Wellesley until the latter's resignation in 1828. He performed much the same services as he had in India, though with greatly enhanced authority. Wellesley made much use of him on confidential missions to England; and such statesmen as Wellington, Peel, and Canning treated him with all the confidence that they would have shown his principal.<sup>80</sup>

He took a prominent part in the ceremonies attendant on Wellesley's second marriage on 29 October 1825 to Marianne Patterson, an American widow hardly more than half the Marquess's age.<sup>81</sup> Shawe and the new Lady Wellesley became firm friends and corresponded frequently in later years.<sup>82</sup>

Wellesley kept the same state in Ireland that he had in India. On 6 June 1826, indeed, Shawe found it necessary to write to Sir William Knighton, Keeper of the Privy Purse to George IV, explaining away an article in the *New Monthly Magazine* which accused Wellesley of aping royal magnificence at a Dublin charity ball.<sup>83</sup> Though Wellesley's great abilities were recognized, his imperiousness made him as objectionable to certain elements in Irish society as he had been to the East India Company's servants in Calcutta. Creevey noted in 1824 that the Marquess had recently dismissed four officers about the court for drinking as a toast at a Beefsteak Club dinner: "Success to the export trade of Ireland, and may Lord Wellesley be the first article exported!"<sup>84</sup>

When Wellesley returned to England in 1828, Shawe remained in his confidential service. His government pension presumably made it unnecessary for him to seek supplementary employment. Wellesley was for three years Lord Steward of the Household; but even in his seventies he still longed for authority. It was in a mood of triumph that he sent Shawe a note on 2 September 1833 announcing that they would shortly return to Ireland.<sup>85</sup> Creevey, who dined at Dublin Castle in November, supplies a characteristically lively picture of the Marquess in his last public office. Creevey was already a favorite of Lady Wellesley's, and the Marquess was ready to forgive his past transgressions.

After we had been there some time [Creevey relates], enter their excellencies arm in arm as King and Queen, bowing condescendingly to their little circle till the little Marquis with his piercing eyes said, 'That is Mr. Creevey, I'm sure,' and then coming forward he took hold of my hand with both of his and said, 'I am glad to have caught you at last, Mr. Creevey.' . . . at dinner . . . from the time we sat down for a couple of hours, I should say, the Marquis and I had such an incessant run of jokes and stories that we quite convulsed all our household. . . . In spirits and accuracy in recollection quotation &c. &c. Wellesley might be *twenty* instead of 75.<sup>86</sup>

The Marquess was particularly delighted when Creevey inquired about his head of police, Sir John Harvey—"a large, handsome man, but by far the most vulgar would-be gentleman you ever beheld, extremely dressy withal—", "Who was the gentleman with the embroidered stomach?"<sup>87</sup> No one enjoyed the evening more than Shawe, unkindly described by Creevey as "a belonging



of Wellesley's in India of 30 years' standing,"<sup>88</sup> who wrote to a friend in England that "Mr. Creevey by agreeableness has greatly contributed to Ld. Wellesley's happiness, and to *his years*,"<sup>89</sup>

Wellesley retired from office late in 1834. On his return to England Shawe for a time gave the Duke of Wellington the benefit of his extensive experience in drawing up the Irish Church Reform Bill.<sup>90</sup> He then busied himself in helping to procure for Wellesley a grant from the East India Company in belated acknowledgment of the Marquess's services as Governor-General. On 1 November 1837 he had the pleasure of sending Wellesley an account of the meeting of East India Company stockholders at which a gift of £20,000 to him was approved.<sup>91</sup> This was his last important service to his patron. Wellesley still wanted a dukedom; but the men of his generation and Shawe's no longer guarded the fountain of honor, and this final ambition was never realized.

Shawe settled down to a life of leisure at 26 South Street, Grosvenor Square, a few doors from Lord Melbourne.<sup>92</sup> It was here that Thackeray came to know him when he visited London in April, 1836 to confer with his stepfather regarding the projected *Constitutional* newspaper. The two hit it off from the first. After their initial encounter, Thackeray told Isabella that he "liked the old gentleman very much, he was exceedingly kind, & cordial."<sup>93</sup> Another meeting a few days later led him to write of Shawe: "a dear old gentleman he is, . . . so good so honest, & so fond of you, that he has quite won my heart."<sup>94</sup> When Thackeray and his wife moved to London in 1837, they saw Shawe constantly. Through his friend Edward Sterling, a staff writer for the *Times*, Shawe got Thackeray a post as book-reviewer for that newspaper. And his connections in the peerage and in parliament enabled him to supply franks for Thackeray's letters, an important service in the days before the penny post.

Shawe spent the winter of 1839-1840 in Ireland and on the continent, passing some time with Lord Brougham at Nice.<sup>95</sup> But old age was taking its toll. Thackeray spoke of him in December of 1839 as a "poor old man",<sup>96</sup> and in March of the following year Isabella noted: "He writes to Arthur [Shawe] in good spirits apparently and with a steady hand. I fear his money matters are in a sad state."<sup>97</sup>

Thanks to the hospitality of his many friends, Shawe was nevertheless able to repeat his continental tour the following winter. The last of his preserved letters to Wellesley was

written from Rome on 14 April 1841. He had just received from the Marquess a copy of the resolution in which the Court of Directors of the East India Company provided for the erection of a statue of Wellesley in the court room of the East India House. He replied with his usual courtliness. "That you should have found time to write to me at a moment of such excitement, and that you should have had the kindness to devote a moment to impart to me intelligence of a nature so gratifying to all your friends, is duly appreciated & deeply felt by me." Shawe was pleased as well by "the cordial reconciliation between your brother Arthur and yourself," which had grown out of the Company's action. "I always felt convinced that a free explanation would produce it. It appears that the Duke has naturally & worthily availed himself of the present occasion. I trust it will be a source of happiness to you both & I am persuaded that no one will rejoice at it more than His Grace & that it will afford great relief to his mind." Shawe goes on to tell of his own affairs. The last four months he had spent in Naples, living chiefly with Lord and Lady Sligo. At the end of the month he expects his "old friend Lord Lynedoch [who] has been at Malta all the Winter. He is above 95 & he rides every day, & generally dines at the Club." In Rome he has seen "all the shews & ceremonies of the Holy Week, which I have heard your Lordship describe. . . . The fireworks at St. Angelo were also very magnificent . . . but did not surpass the fireworks at Lucknow or at the Government House." He intends to return to England by way of Florence, Venice, the Tirol, and the Rhine.<sup>98</sup>

Recording the arrival of a letter from Shawe a few days later, Thackeray noted that there "also has come a very pathetic one from his servt. hoping for the return of his dear Colonel."<sup>99</sup> But Shawe had to disappoint his faithful valet. His income was substantially reduced, and he found it necessary to remove to Marine Terrace, Kingstown, Ireland, near his half-sisters Mary Shawe (his favorite now, as she had been nearly forty years earlier, when he wrote to her mother: "I am prepared to entertain a very particular esteem and affection for that young Lady")<sup>100</sup> and Jane Corsellis. There he passed his last years in surroundings gloomy enough. Thackeray wrote to his mother, after dining with him in September of 1842 :

The Old Colonel continues very comfortable in health. . . . That little Corsilles [sic] is an odious conceited vulgar little wretch, and in order to show his consequence to me, bullied his poor little boy during dinner time in the most unjust

& brutal way. It must be a hard thing for the poor old Colonel who has been used to refined and educated gentlemen all his life to be obliged to put up with such a snob for constant society and with the old ladies that form good old Miss Shawe's twaddling old circle.

Sho is a very nice creature, kind simple and tender-hearted. I wish you could see the dinner-table though, and the awe in wh. they all are of little humpey, who sate swaggering and bragging in the most wonderful way. He produced with a great manifesto a bottle of claret saying with a roguish look to the ladies 'I know the ladies are fond of clart?—and people were helped and he asked in triumph, Isn't it a fine sound wine?—Nobody dared tell the truth except me, that it was very bad, and why should one say otherwise to such a little self-sufficient creature?'<sup>101</sup>

The despondency that these surroundings induced in the Colonel was intensified towards the end of the month by alarming rumours concerning the serious illness of the Marquess Wellesley. Inquiring into this report on 26 September, he used the occasion to congratulate Alfred Montgomery, his successor as Wellesley's private secretary, on his approaching marriage. It was his desire, he wrote,

to wish you all the happiness that we old Bachelors are taught to believe belongs to that state—of this I am sure that no one becomes an old Bachelor from choice, though many survive the lot for years. Do not think them very useful beings—old Maids are much more useful & in some respects necessary—But an old Bachelor is a very doubtful & seldom a voluntary character.<sup>102</sup>

Wellesley died in his eighty-third year on the day this letter was written. His faithful friend did not long survive him. Shawe's last scene was one that Thackeray himself might have conceived in his darker moods: a polished gentleman who had served his country actively and well for nearly half a century, who had for thirty years cheerfully enjoyed the best English society, whose taste in wines had been celebrated, reduced to maudlin remorse at the thought of his bachelorhood, as he sipped "little humpey's" bad claret in an Irish boarding-house. Shawe's death was announced in the *Dublin Evening Packet* of 7 November 1843, where it is written that "The gallant Colonel was beloved by all who knew him. He was a most benevolent, sincere, and warm-hearted friend."<sup>103</sup> But his real memorial is Thackeray's *Pendennis*.

## VI

Out of his recollections of Shawe Thackeray fashioned a wonderfully life-like portrait of a superannuated Regency gentleman. So faithful is Thackeray's picture, indeed, that Shawe's history may be regarded almost as a projection backward of

Major Pendennis's career. We know the Major in Thackeray's novel, as Thackeray knew Shawe in the years after 1836, as an old man who has given up active life. He is out of touch with the times; he even on occasion displays a regrettable penchant for twaddling. Thackeray allows the young blackleg Bloundell-Bloundell to speak in the most contemptuous terms about him, to say that "everybody knew old Pen, regular old trencherman at Gaunt House, notorious old bore, regular old fogey."<sup>104</sup> Yet it is obvious that Major Pendennis has not always been a senile social butterfly. The enviable position that he still retains in the London world is a testimony to substantial accomplishments in the past. In dealing with critical situations that arise during the course of the novel—Pen's infatuation with the Fotheringay, the attempt of his own valet Morgan to blackmail him—, "the old negotiator"<sup>105</sup> as Thackeray calls him, conducts himself with all the coolness and adroitness of a practiced man of affairs. Knowing Shawe's history, we understand better why Thackeray has so portrayed Major Pendennis.<sup>106</sup>

The two keys to the Major's character are selfishness and simplicity. "I am an old soldier, begad," he says, "and I learned in early life to make myself comfortable."<sup>107</sup> So he sinks all his fortune in an annuity to achieve an income that will allow him to figure creditably among his fashionable friends. "Dammy sir!" he remarks, "life without money and the best society isn't worth having."<sup>108</sup> Yet he is continually betraying his avowed policy of self-interest. When Pen falls ill, the Major puts him into Dr. Goodenough's care, and hurries off "to the Marquis of Steyne's house of Stillbrook, where he was engaged to shoot partridges."

But we must do the major the justice to say [Thackeray continues] that he was very unhappy and gloomy in demeanour. Wagg and Wonham rallied him about his low spirits; asked whether he was crossed in love? and otherwise diverted themselves at his expense. He lost his money at whist after dinner, and actually trumped his partner's highest spade. And the thoughts of the suffering boy, of whom he was proud and whom he loved after his manner, kept the old fellow awake half through the night, and made him feverish and uneasy. . . .

The next day he was going out shooting, about noon, with some of the gentlemen staying at Lord Steyne's house; and the company, waiting for the carriages, were assembled on the terrace in front of the house when a fly drove up from the neighbouring station and a grey-headed rather shabby old gentleman jumped out and asked for Major Pendennis. It was Mr. Bows. He took the major aside and spoke to him; most of the gentlemen round about saw that something serious had happened, from the alarmed look of the major's face.

Wagg said, 'It's a bailiff come down to nab the major,' but nobody laughed at the pleasantry.

'Hullo! What's the matter, Pendennis?' cried Lord Steyne, with his strident voice;—'anything wrong?'

'It's—it's—my boy that's *dead*,' said the major, and burst into a sob--the old man was quite overcome.

'Not dead, my lord ; but very ill when I left London,' Mr. Bows said, in a low voice.

A britzka came up at this moment as the three men were speaking. The peer looked at his watch. 'You've twenty minutes to catch the mail-train. Jump in, Pendennis ; and drive like h—, sir, do you hear ?'<sup>109</sup>

Henry James once described Thackeray as "a great artist whose pathetic effects were sometimes too visibly prepared."<sup>110</sup> But, if age has staled many of Thackeray's elaborately contrived efforts to be moving—for example, the scene around Helen Pendennis's deathbed—the unobtrusive and almost incidental pathos of such episodes as this, and there are many like it in his novels, remains untouched by the passage of time.

The Major's simplicity is best shown in his unquestioning deference to the claims of rank and fortune. The democracy of the new age appals him. "We are grown doosidly republican," he complains.<sup>111</sup> "Dammy, they don't make gentlemen and ladies now ; and in fifty years you'll hardly know one man from another."<sup>112</sup> When Pen appears to be on the point of marrying the Fotheringay, he inquires grandly, "Why are there no such things as *lettres de cachet*—and a Bastille for young fellows of family ?" "The major lived in such good company," Thackeray explains, "that he might be excused for feeling like an earl."<sup>113</sup> Taking the world as it is, he desires only to be conventional in his actions and orthodox in his opinions. Consider his advice concerning church-going.

'It don't matter so much in town, Pen,' he said, 'for there the women go and the men are not missed. But when a gentleman is *sur ses terres*, he must give an example to the country people : and if I could turn a tune, I even think I should sing. The Duke of St. David's, whom I have the honour of knowing, always sings in the country, and let me tell you, it has a doosed fine effect from the family pew.'<sup>114</sup>

The major's absolute conservatism is a large part of his charm. He is delightful to contemplate because he is so entirely predictable ; one knows that he will always do what he considers to be the "correct thing."

Finally, the Major's speech is as full of meat and as unfailingly delightful as the language Dickens gives to Pecksniff or to Mrs. Gamp. Whether he employs his usual "curt, manly, and straightforward tone," or the "certain drawl, which he always adopted when he was most conceited and fine,"<sup>115</sup> what he has to say is always brilliantly in character. Thackeray's keen ear for the phrase that characterizes is nowhere better shown, for example,

than in the Major's remarks to Pen after the two of them have been invited to dine with the Fokers in Grosvenor Street :

' Having obtained the entree into Lady Agnes Foker's house,' he said to Pen, with an affectionate solemnity which befitted the importance of the occasion, ' it behooves you, my dear boy, to keep it. You must mind and *never neglect* to call in Grosvenor Street when you come to London. I recommend you to read up carefully, in Debrett, the alliances and genealogy of the Earls of Rosher-ville, and if you can, to make some trifling allusions to the family, something historical, neat, and complimentary, and that sort of thing, which you, who have a poetic fancy, can do pretty well. Mr. Foker himself is a worthy man, though not of high extraction or indeed much education. He always makes a point of having some of the family porter [Mr Foker is a brewer] served round after dinner, which you will on no account refuse, and which I shall drink myself, though *all* beer disagrees with me confoundedly.' And the heroic martyr [Thackeray continues] did actually sacrifice himself, as he said he would, on the day when the dinner took place, and old Mr Foker, at the head of his table, made his usual joke about Foker's Entree. We should all of us, I am sure, have liked to see the major's grin, when the worthy old gentleman made his time-honoured joke.<sup>116</sup>

As the last sentences show, Thackeray is as fond of Major Pendennis in his novel as he had been of Colonel Shawe in life. Like Pen, " He studied his uncle's peculiarities with a constant relish, and was always in a good humour with his worldly old mentor."<sup>117</sup> He refers to him as " the worthy gentleman," " the honest major," or " the stout old boy."<sup>118</sup> But his affection is cool and judicious ; it carries him sympathetically into the mind of his subject without causing him to praise or excuse.<sup>119</sup> The result is perhaps the most finished and perfectly controlled portrait in all of Thackeray's fiction. But it is a portrait, like those of Miss Crawley and Jos Sedley, of a nature emotionally shallow ; Thackeray does not in it explore the profounder aspects of personality, as he does in less perfect but more ambitious characters. So *Pendennis*, like *Vanity Fair*, illustrates the two orders of characterization that one finds in Thackeray's fiction, each of which is an essential part of his comprehensive picture of human life.

## CHAPTER SIX

### ESMOND

#### I

*Esmond* stands apart from the rest of Thackeray's later fiction in that it does not follow the pattern of serial publication established by *Vanity Fair*. "I've been . . . reading back numbers . . .," he noted as he was finishing *Pendennis*. "I lit upon a very stupid part I'm sorry to say : and yet how well written it is.. What a shame the Author dont write a complete good story."<sup>1</sup> His critics made the same complaint. Among others George Henry Lewes, whose opinion Thackeray greatly prized, took him to task in the *Leader* for "a want of respect for his art, a want of respect for his public," in a word "for sacrificing the artist to the improvisatore."<sup>2</sup>

In *Esmond* Thackeray sought to remedy this deficiency, to write the "complete good story" that he felt he had in him. He abandoned his remunerative system of publication in monthly parts in order that he might plan and write his book as a unified whole. When his first draft was completed, he devoted several months to revising and expanding it. A second, though more cursory, revision occurred when he saw proof. He was well satisfied with the result. James T. Fields relates how

One day, in the snowy winter of 1852, [he] met Thackeray sturdily ploughing his way down Beacon Street with a copy of 'Henry Esmond' (the English edition then just issued) under his arm. Seeing me some way off, he held aloft the volumes and began to shout in great glee. When I came up to him he cried out, 'Here is the very best I can do, and I am carrying it to Prescott as a reward of merit for having given me my first dinner in America. I stand by this book, and am willing to leave it, when I go, as my card.'<sup>3</sup>

(Thackeray was pleased with *Esmond* on another score. *Pendennis* only partially achieved his objective of establishing himself in the eyes of his readers as an essentially kindly and amiable man.) Many critics still complained of his preoccupation with the seamy side of life and the darker aspects of human nature. A writer in the *Athenæum* found *Pendennis* a mere continuation of *Vanity Fair* in this respect.

We protest [he said] against the soundness, the sense, nay, we must add, the sincerity of this universal demolition principle of making dismal effects everywhere in a work professing to give us pictures of the world around us.<sup>4</sup>

Samuel Phillips in the *Times* described *Pendennis* as "dolorous and depressing. . . . The morale might almost be summed up in the American's creed 'There's nothing new, there's nothing true, and it don't signify.'"<sup>5</sup> This criticism too Thackeray sought to meet in *Esmond*. When he was first thinking of *Esmond* early in 1851, he spoke of it as "a story . . . in wh. there shall appear some very good lofty and generous people . . . Perhaps a story without any villain!"<sup>6</sup> And he remained faithful to this early conception, though he did ultimately provide villains of a sort in Lord Mohun and the Pretender.

Yet despite its nobility of tone, *Esmond* is the most melancholy of Thackeray's novels, a point of which he was quite aware while he wrote his book and which filled him with the gloomiest forebodings concerning its chances of popular success. The atmosphere of melancholy that pervades *Esmond* is explained if we examine its "secret history," if we note down Thackeray's "private thoughts and meanings . . . alongside of his story."<sup>7</sup> as he invites us to do in a passage already quoted from *Pendennis*.<sup>7</sup> To do this is to trace the relation between *Esmond* and what has come to be known as "the Brookfield affair."

That the impress of Thackeray's association with the Brookfields was not long ago recognized testifies to the effectiveness of the smoke-screen laid down in *Mrs. Brookfield and her Circle*, a filial tribute compiled by Mrs. Brookfield's son Charles with the aid of his wife. They represent the Brookfield union as entirely happy, and they suppress all hints of a quarrel between Brookfield and Thackeray. The real story of this triangular relationship was partially told five years ago in Thackeray's *Letters and Private Papers*.<sup>8</sup> It is now possible to complete that story on the basis of further documents which have subsequently come to hand. To compare these new papers, which include Mrs. Brookfield's correspondence with her husband and most of the letters that she wrote to Thackeray, with Charles Brookfield's narrative is to be reminded of what Mandeville said of Shaftesbury :

His Notions I confess are generous and refined : They are a high Compliment to Human-kind, and capable by the help of a little Enthusiasm of Inspiring us with the most Noble Sentiments concerning the Dignity of our exalted Nature : What Pity it is that they are not true.<sup>9</sup>

But the reader may judge the case for himself. ✓



## II

Thackeray's friendship with William Henry Brookfield began in the autumn of 1830, when both young men were undergraduates at Cambridge. Brookfield was a clever, handsome youth to whom the university offered a welcome refuge from a dismal boyhood passed in the home of "a rigid dissenting Attorney."<sup>10</sup> Without the customary passports to success in undergraduate society—rank, money, or brilliant abilities—, he yet made his way easily by his gentlemanly manners, his admirable faculty of mimicry, and his vein of ready humor. He soon became one of the great men of the university, the intimate of Tennyson, Arthur Henry Hallam, James Spedding, and Richard Monckton Milnes; and Thackeray later recalled that it was considered an honor to be seen walking with him.<sup>11</sup>

The rest of Brookfield's life was an anti-climax. The promise of his Cambridge days was never quite fulfilled. The capital mistake of his career occurred in 1834, when he drifted into the church, not from any sense of dedication, but solely because no other profession seemed to offer so convenient an avenue to preferment. As a clergyman the very qualities that would have made his fortune as a lawyer or as an actor—and the stage was his real vocation, had it been open to a Victorian gentleman—aroused a distrust which he never succeeded in entirely overcoming.

While Brookfield was serving as a curate in Southampton during 1837, he met Jane Octavia Elton. He was then twenty-eight and she sixteen. The youngest daughter of the scholar and country gentleman Charles Elton, later sixth baronet, she had spent an uneventful girlhood in the provincial society of Clifton. She was a tall and stately beauty—her father called her "Glumdaleclitch"—, and intelligent enough to be discontented with her country admirers. In comparison with them Brookfield seemed vastly talented and attractive. Brookfield, for his part, was equally taken with this lovely, fresh, and admiring girl. Despite some grumbling from the Eltons on the score of Brookfield's plebeian origins, the two became engaged in 1838. They did not marry until three years later, when Brookfield was given a London curacy. During their long engagement their relationship remained that of genial instructor and adoring pupil. A few months before their wedding, Miss Elton was still beginning her letters, "Dearest Mr. Brookfield." She later found a des-

cription of her attitude towards him at this time in the following stanza of *In Memoriam* :

Her faith is fixt and cannot move,  
 She darkly feels him great and wise,  
 She dwells on him with faithful eyes,  
 'I cannot understand : love.'<sup>12</sup>

The couple settled in the metropolis early in 1842. But the success that Brookfield had anticipated, once he enjoyed "the great scope of London," did not come. He totally lacked the gloss and unction expected of clergymen on their promotion. Though he possessed a sincere and simple faith, he would not affiliate himself with any of the parties that then controlled ecclesiastical preferment. He hated equally, he said, "the High Church & the Low Church & the Church between the two."<sup>13</sup> What approval he did win came from persons little likely to be of use to him. Kinglake, a "Nothingarian" who remarked that "important if true" should be written over the door of every church,<sup>14</sup> paid him the damaging compliment that he was "never the least demoralised by taking Holy Orders."<sup>15</sup> By 1848 Brookfield had achieved nothing more substantial than an Inspectorship of Schools. The bitterness of hope long deferred is to be detected in his remark to Charles Greville, "Believe me, that in our Church there is a great demand for dullness."<sup>16</sup>

To Brookfield's professional disappointments were added a variety of domestic irritations. Brought up in a county family, Mrs. Brookfield had no practical knowledge of housekeeping and proved a most inefficient helpmate to a poor curate. Her health, which had always been delicate, became very unsettled after 1844. During several months in 1848, indeed, she was an invalid, confined to her sofa. Nor did she any longer regard her husband with the adoration of early years; in comparison with the distinguished men she was beginning to meet in London society, he had come to seem rather ordinary. It was a final cause of disharmony that, though both the Brookfields wanted children, they remained childless for nearly ten years.

Like many Victorian husbands, Brookfield had rounded Bragaglio Point without doubling Cape Turk; and he made his wife feel his annoyance at her shortcomings. He reproached her for her domestic inefficiency, her lack of interest in his work, even for her childlessness. He became cold and reserved at home and sought amusement among his bachelor friends, that she nonetheless managed to explain away even his neglect is evident

from another stanza of *In Memoriam* which she applied to this phase of their history :

Her life is lone, he sits apart,  
He loves her yet, she will not weep,  
Tho' rapt in matters dark and deep  
He seems to slight her simple heart.<sup>17</sup>

"I am afraid my dear Mrs. Brookfield will die," Thackeray wrote during the summer of 1848. "It will be better for her--She never says a word but I know the cause of a great part of her malady well enough--a husband whom she loved with the most fanatical fondness and who --and who is my friend too--a good fellow upright generous kind to all the world except her."<sup>18</sup>

### III

Thackeray had renewed his friendship with Brookfield when the latter settled in London in 1842. For several years Mrs. Brookfield regarded him with some disfavor as an unsuitable acquaintance for a clergyman. But Thackeray, deprived of the company of his own wife and unable--as he said--to "live without the tenderness of some woman,"<sup>19</sup> found in her a new "beau-idéal." "I have been in love with her these four years--," he confessed in 1846, "not so as to endanger peace or appetite but she always seems to me to speak and do and think as a woman should."<sup>20</sup> Yet for some time Thackeray remained Brookfield's friend rather than his wife's.

Only in the summer of 1848 did Thackeray's real intimacy with Mrs. Brookfield begin. He was now a famous man, and his attentions were the more welcome to Mrs. Brookfield because of her husband's withdrawal of favor. When Brookfield at length reproved her for the increasing closeness of her association with Thackeray, she was goaded to rebellion. "I do think at near 30," she wrote to him in October, "one may take up a line of one's own, & where one feels affectionately one may venture to say so, where one is intimate enough for it to be well understood what one means."<sup>21</sup> Two weeks later, when both she and Thackeray were guests at Clevedon Court, the Eltons' country house, she took him into her confidence regarding the failure of her marriage. What she told him can be only conjecturally reconstructed. No doubt Brookfield's neglect, the humiliating rebuffs with which he met her appeals for affection, and her own ill-health were the burden of her complaint. All her life Thackeray's daughter Anne remembered a day when she and her

*impatience* *Ridicule by imitation*  
 sister visited the Brookfields' home, and the master of the house in a fit of petulance mimicked his wife to her face with such devastating fidelity that the little girls were convulsed with laughter and Mrs. Brookfield fled weeping from the room.<sup>22</sup> "I take refuge in stolid silence," she wrote to Thackeray in December "which is only a type of the useless blank of all my life. . . . I cannot find anything to do that would take me out of such a painful state of sensitiveness that it seems as if it wd. come to a crash and end in insanity some day."<sup>23</sup>

The relationship that resulted from these confidences continued for the next three years. There was a strong physical element in Thackeray's love. "I once told her," he wrote to their common friend Kate Perry, "that my passion was like that Afric whose story we have read in the Arabian Nights, who would have grown as large as the world, had the Seal of God not been imprinted on the vase that contained him."<sup>24</sup> But what was the great passion of Thackeray's life was scarcely an *amitié amoureuse* to Mrs. Brookfield. "It is not as if Mr. Thackeray were some young Adonis in the guards," she told her husband. "He is far too entirely *wide awake* not to understand the sisterly feeling I have for him, which could not ever by any force of circumstances *clash* with any other affection."<sup>25</sup> Yet she found in Thackeray a wonderfully entertaining and sympathetic companion, who brought the London world into her drawing-room, and who answered needs in her emotional nature of which her husband hardly recognized the existence. So Thackeray wrote to her upon the death of his friend Charles Buller, who for many years had a similar alliance with Lady Ashburton, that this pair "were not of the sentimental sort like you & the buffoon your humble Servant and made a practice of condemning as maudlin sentiments which are not so—but on the contrary natural simple ennobling."<sup>26</sup> As for Brookfield, he was too sure of his wife's love to be disturbed by jealousy and too fond of Thackeray to deny him what alleviation of his loneliness Mrs. Brookfield could provide. Furthermore, as Thackeray pointed out, "a part of poor Brookfield's pride of possession was that we should envy him and admire her."<sup>27</sup> Confident that he could control the situation, and characteristically careless of appearances, he was content to permit its continuance.

But Brookfield's temper was uncertain, and from time to time an unguarded expression on Thackeray's part or a burst of sentiment from Mrs. Brookfield caused him to protest. When he cracked the whip, his wife always came to heel. "Thackeray

stamps & growls at your having written a very chill letter to him," he told her on one of these occasions. "There is no doubt you were right in doing what I wished—& I am much obliged to you—& hereby give you a kiss."<sup>28</sup> To which Mrs. Brookfield replied, "I wd. be quite content to throw snowballs if I have a kiss from you."<sup>29</sup> But Brookfield did not persist long in his displeasure, and after an interval his wife and Thackeray were able to resume their intimacy.

## IV

When Thackeray began to plan *The History of Henry Esmond* in 1851, he and Mrs. Brookfield had come to assume that theirs would be a lifelong friendship. He meant hardly less to her than did her husband, while she had long been the center of his emotional life. But Brookfield had grown tired of his role. The petulance which he had occasionally displayed in earlier years hardened into a permanent attitude. While Thackeray was delivering in London his celebrated lectures on *The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century* during the early summer, Brookfield was ill in the country.<sup>30</sup> He did not rejoin his wife, who had been sharing Thackeray's pleasure in his success, until Thackeray left for the continent in July.

Thackeray returned to London late the following month to discover that Brookfield had for some time past been behaving rudely, even brutally, to his wife. Dr. Johnson's dictum that "it is difficult for a sick man not to be a scoundrel" may perhaps be offered in excuse for his conduct, since his health had taken a turn for the worse, and his doctors thought for a while of sending him off to Italy.<sup>31</sup> In any event, his past forbearance towards Mrs. Brookfield had disappeared. He "says to her face he ought to have married a cook," Thackeray noted, "and treats her like one."<sup>32</sup> Thackeray was not refused admittance to the Brookfield house, but he was made to feel unwelcome there.

The misfortune of poor Wms. mood [he wrote to Mrs. Brookfield] is that it makes perforce hypocrites of you and all who approach him-- . . . The fact of your position makes it impossible to write almost—I am not to show that I feel you are miserable. I am not to show that I think your husband is wicked and cruel to you. I am not to show that I think you know you are unhappy, and are treated with the most cruel tyranny—Nobody is to know anything of your misery. We are to go on grinning as if we were happy, because William's cough is certainly very bad, and he should not be disturbed in exercising his temper.<sup>33</sup>

A few days later it became obvious that Thackeray and Mrs. Brookfield must reconcile themselves to a permanent separation.

In a letter to their common friend Kate Perry, Thackeray reflected on the whole course of the affair :

I don't see how any woman should not love a man who had loved her as I did ~~Jo~~ I don't see how any man shd. not love a woman so beautiful, so unhappy, so tender ; I don't see how any husband, however he might have treated his treasure, should be indifferent at the idea of losing it. But that I knew I was safe (I mean that any wrong was out of the question on our children's account) I suppose I should have broken away myself. I'm sure that one or the other on their side were wrong in not dismissing me. . . . Of all this weakness, goodness, love, generosity, vanity, *playing with edged tools*, we are now paying the penalty . . .

I see nothing but time to heal this wound of ~~amputation~~. . . . I grieve that we are all wretched. I wish that I had never loved her. I have been played with by a woman, and flung over at a beck from the Lord and master - . . . It's death I tell you between us. I was packing away yesterday the letters of years. These didn't make me cry. They made me laugh as I knew they would. It was for this that I gave my heart away. I was 'When are you coming dear Mr. Thackeray,' and 'William will be so happy,' and 'I thought after you had gone away how I had forgot, etc.' and at a word from Brookfield afterwards it is 'I revere and admire him and love him with not merely a dutiful but a genuine love'—Amen. The thought that I have been made a fool of is the bitterest of all, perhaps. . . . We must part in peace. I have loved his wife too much to be able to bear to see her belong even to her husband any more—that's the truth.<sup>34</sup>

On September twenty-third an open quarrel between Thackeray and Brookfield occurred. Words felt to be quite unforgivable were spoken on both sides. Thackeray wrote to Miss Perry, in returning unexamined a letter that Mrs. Brookfield had sent him through another friend :

The only thing is Duty Duty Duty. Her husband is a good fellow and does love her : and I think of his constant fondness for me & kindness and how cruelly I've stabbed him and outraged him with my words—Well, I'd do it again—though I wish that it could have been any other dagger than mine to strike the blow—The sword must have fallen some day or other. I am glad she did her duty and throw me over for him—and though in my moments of pique & rage I don't forgive her, I do at better times & say God bless her. But we must bear our fates. We shant and cant and musnt meet again as heretofore—it was for that I stabbed the husband exproes to put her up as high as I could and to make the *zusammenkunft* impossible. Poor old boy, I forget that he has ever been cruel, and think of 500 jolly meetings and kind greetings I have had from him. Who would have divined that all that friendship, that such a good fellow, should end in treason—for a treason it is say what I will.<sup>35</sup>

## V

When Thackeray wrote this letter, he had left London for the country, where he began to write his novel, in a mood of profound melancholy and bitterness. But except insofar as it determined the tone of Thackeray's book,<sup>36</sup> the crisis through which he had passed was not at once reflected in *Esmond*. The early part of the novel had necessarily to deal with Harry Esmond's

boyhood and the history of his family. For the emotional coloring of these chapters Thackeray drew upon memories of his childhood. In 1848 he had revisited Addiscombe, his home for two summers as a boy.

All sorts of recollections of my youth came back to me : [he wrote in his diary], dark and sad and painful with my dear good mother as a gentle angel interposing between me and misery— . . . I went to see our old quarters . . . the chairs in the drawing-room were still ours, and I recognized what I am sure was my mother's bed—it made me feel very queer—My old room is the Generals dressing room—how well I remember the cawing of the rooks there of a morning ! they were still talking away in the wilderness wh. is quite unaltered.<sup>37</sup>

Here is foreshadowed the central situation of the first six chapters of *Esmond*, the loneliness of Harry's unhappy boyhood and its alleviation, by the maternal love of Lady Castlewood ; here, indeed, are the very rooks that haunt Castlewood Hall in Thackeray's novel.

At about the time that he finished this section of his novel a meeting was arranged between Brookfield and himself by their friends Lord and Lady Ashburton. The Ashburtons hoped that all could be made smooth between them before the Brookfields departed for a winter in Madeira. "We have not had a reconciliation but a conciliation . . .," Thackeray noted after their conference. "The morning was spent in parleys and the Inspector and I shook hands at the end and I'm very thankful that her dear little heart is made tranquil on the score of our enmity at least. Friends of course we're not ; but bear each other."<sup>38</sup>

(The affair was thus formally terminated. Thackeray could not dismiss it at once from his mind, but he was able to exorcise it in another way.

The writer's life [observes Somerset Maugham] . . . is full of tribulation. . . . But he has one compensation. Whenever he has anything on his mind, whether it be a harassing reflection, grief at the death of a friend, unrequited love, wounded pride, anger at the treachery of someone to whom he has shown kindness, in short any emotion or any perplexing thought, he has only to put it down in black and white, using it as the theme of a story or the decoration of an essay to forget all about it. He is the only free man.<sup>39</sup>)

During the next three months, as Thackeray wrote the last eight chapters of the first book of *Esmond* and the first two chapters of the second, he again lived through the whole course of the Brookfield affair and made it a part of his novel. In the six months that followed, as he wrote the rest of *Esmond*, he sketched out in fantasy the way his relation with Mrs. Brookfield might have developed under other circumstances. He found his plot, as already outlined, readily adaptable to his preoccupation. He

continued to identify himself with Harry ; but Harry was now a man, not a boy. "The hero is as stately as Sir Charles Grandison," he told his mother, ". . . a handsome likeness of an ugly son of yours."<sup>40</sup> Lady Castlewood he thought of no longer as Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth, but as Mrs. Brookfield. And if bluff, lazy, amiable Lord Castlewood does not closely resemble Brookfield in character, he is Brookfield's counterpart as a husband. So it was that Thackeray came to tell the poignant story of the bankruptcy of love at Castlewood Hall.<sup>41</sup> Despite its setting a hundred and fifty years earlier, the first book of *Esmond* details a case history of Victorian domestic tyranny that might appropriately have been cited by John Stuart Mill in an appendix to his essay on *The Subjection of Women*.

After a two years' absence at Cambridge, Harry returns to Castlewood to witness an

actual tragedy of life, which absorbed and interested him more than all his tutor taught him. The persons whom he loved best in the world, and to whom he owed most, were living unhappily together. The gentlest and kindest of women was suffering ill-usage and shedding tears in secret : the man who made her wretched by neglect, if not by violence, was Harry's benefactor and patron.<sup>42</sup>

He traces the steps by which this sad situation has come into being. During his absence Lady Castlewood

had oldened . . . as people do who suffer silently great mental pain ; and learned much that she had never suspected before. She was taught by that bitter teacher Misfortune. A child, the mother of other children, but two years back her lord was a god to her ; his words her law ; his smile her sunshine ; his lazy commonplaces listened to eagerly, as if they were words of wisdom—all his wishes and freaks obeyed with a servile devotion. She had been my lord's chief slave and blind worshipper.<sup>43</sup>

But when Lord Castlewood added unfaithfulness to neglect,

Her spirit rebelled and disowned any more obedience. First she had to bear in secret the passion of losing the adored object ; then to get a farther initiation, and find this worshipped being was but a clumsy idol ; then to admit the silent truth, that it was she was superior, and not the monarch her master : that she had thoughts which his brains could never master, and was the better of the two ; quite separate from my lord although tied to him, and bound as almost all people (save a very happy few) to work all her life alone.<sup>44</sup>

Nor was Lord Castlewood any happier than his wife. It was a torment to him to understand

that the woman who does his bidding, and submits to his humour, should be his lord ; that she can think a thousand things beyond the power of his muddled brains ; and that in yonder head, on the pillow opposite to him, lie a thousand feelings, mysteries of thought, latent scorns and rebellions, whereof he only dimly perceives the existence as they look out furtively from her eyes. . . . So the



lamp was out in Castlewood Hall, and the lord and lady there saw each other as they were.<sup>45</sup>

Inevitably the household was an unhappy one. Husband and wife could not be together without friction.

It was my lord's custom to fling out many jokes . . . in the presence of his wife and children, at meals—clumsy sarcasms which my lady turned many a time, or which, sometimes, she affected not to hear, or which now and again would hit their mark and make the poor victim wince (as you could see by her flushing face and eyes filling with tears), or which again worked her up to anger and retort, when, in answer to one of these heavy bolts, she would flash back with a quivering reply.<sup>46</sup>

"So," Thackeray concludes, "into the sad secret of his patron's household Harry Esmond became initiated, he scarce knew how. . . . One of the deepest sorrows of a life which had never, in truth, been very happy, came upon him now, when he was compelled to understand and pity a grief which he stood quite powerless to relieve."<sup>47</sup>

Harry's presence at Castlewood is, of course, precisely the complicating factor that Thackeray's had been in the Brookfields' household. In transferring his relationship with Mrs. Brookfield to his novel, however, Thackeray made one crucial alteration. La Rochefoucauld says that in every love affair there is "celui qui aime, et celui qui se laisse aimer." In *Esmond* it is Lady Castlewood who loves, and Harry who allows himself to be loved. Remembering that Thackeray both praised and reproached Mrs. Brookfield at the time of their separation, that he was at once tender and angry with her, we can comprehend how this reversal of roles in his novel helped to assuage his wounded vanity and satisfy his ambivalent feelings.

Lady Castlewood has long been recognized as the most complex of Thackeray's characters. The reader sees her entirely through Harry's eyes; he is never admitted to her mind. As a result, her conduct sometimes seems difficult to interpret with certainty. But once it is understood that she falls in love with Harry very early in the novel, at a time, indeed, when she is twenty-four and he sixteen, most difficulties of interpretation disappear. And Thackeray surely makes this point sufficiently plain, for only on the assumption that she is passionately jealous can one explain her cruel and insulting words to Harry when she discovers his fondness for the pretty daughter of a local blacksmith, a fondness that is the means of bringing into the family the smallpox raging

do not know how much you suffer in those critical maladies of the heart, until the disease is over and you look back on it afterwards. During the time, the suffering is at least sufferable. The day passes in more or less of pain, and the night wears away somehow. 'Tis only in after-days that we see what the danger has been—as a man out a-hunting or riding for his life looks at a leap, and wonders how he should have survived the taking of it.<sup>57</sup>

## VII

With the second chapter of the second book—*Esmond* ceases to be the record of Thackeray's past history. But there is a return to "the stormy region of long passion unfulfilled,"<sup>58</sup> in Harry's later meetings with Lady Castlewood. Here Thackeray envisions what might have happened between him and Mrs. Brookfield in other circumstances. The account of Harry's first encounter with Lady Castlewood after his return from the wars in the famous chapter "The 24th December" is a fantasy of wish-fulfilment, a picture of the sort of reunion that Thackeray was never to enjoy with Mrs. Brookfield.

'I knew you would come back,' [Lady Castlewood said] . . . And to-day, Henry, in the anthem, when they sang it, "When the Lord turned the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream," I thought, yes, like them that dream—them that dream. And then it went, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy and he that goeth forth and weepeth, shall doubtless come home again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him"; I looked up from the book, and saw you. I was not surprised when I saw you. I knew you would come, my dear, and saw the gold sunshine round your head. . . .

'Do you know what day it is?' she continued. 'It is the 29th of December—it is your birthday! But last year we did not drink it—no, no. My lord was cold, and my Harry was likely to die; and my brain was in a fever; and we had no wine. But now—now you are come again, bringing your sheaves with you, my dear.' . . .

As he had sometimes felt, gazing up from the deck at midnight into the boundless starry depths overhead, in a rapture of devout wonder at that endless brightness and beauty—in some such way as now, the depth of this pure devotion (which was for the first time, revealed to him quite) smote upon him, and filled his heart with thanksgiving. Gracious God, who was he, weak and friendless creature, that such a love should be poured out upon him? Not in vain, not in vain has he lived—hard and thankless should he be to think so—that has such a treasure given him. What is ambition compared to that? but selfish vanity. . . . Only true love lives after you—follows your memory with secret blessing—or precedes you, and intercedes for you. *Non omnis moriar*—if dying, I yet live in a tender heart or two; nor am lost and hopeless living, if a sainted departed soul still loves and prays for me.<sup>59</sup>

Despite the evidence of continued devotion which this passage provides,—and the latter part of it can be paralleled almost word for word in one of Thackeray's letters to Mrs. Brookfield,<sup>60</sup> Thackeray still felt an obscure resentment against her for having so readily discarded him. So Harry is made to fall in love with Beatrix, who has grown to young womanhood during his absence;

and Lady Castlewood has to suffer the prolonged ordeal of witnessing, nay, of being made the confidante, of Harry's love for her own daughter. Only after fifteen years of this penance, does Thackeray finally unite her with Harry—who even then is moved more by devotion and pity than by love—and send the pair off to Virginia to enjoy the autumn of life together. The last sentence of the novel is a reminder of Lady Castlewood's constant fidelity to Harry.

The only jewel by which my wife sets any store [he writes], and from which she hath never parted, is that gold button she took from my arm on the day when she visited me in prison, and which she wore ever after, as she told me, on the tenderest heart in the world.<sup>61</sup>

Some time after the novel was published a French friend objected to Thackeray's dedication of *Esmond* to Lord Ashburton as snobbish. Thackeray thus explained it to him: "I am indebted to Lord and Lady Ashburton for the very greatest kindness at a period of the deepest grief and calamity. They knew very well the meaning of that dedication. I have said somewhere it is the unwritten part of books that would be the most interesting."<sup>62</sup> I have described the "unwritten part" of *Esmond*, endeavoring to show how the novel seems to reply, when closely interrogated regarding its relation to Thackeray's personal history:

Look in my face ; my name is Might-have-been ;  
I am also called No-more, Too-late, Farewell.<sup>63</sup>

This connection has more than an incidental interest ; it provides, as I have also tried to demonstrate, the clue to the proper interpretation of a puzzling book. We understand why Thackeray thought George Brimley's *Spectator* review of *Esmond* the best of the many that appeared, for Brimley was almost alone in asserting Lady Castlewood's primary importance in the novel. "The record of Colonel Esmond's life," he wrote, "is throughout a record of his attachment to one woman." We also comprehend the significance of Thackeray's reply to Mrs. John Brown, when that lady, regarding Beatrix as the novel's proper heroine, asked him: "Why did you make Esmond marry that old woman?" "My dear lady," was his answer, "it was not I who married them. They married themselves."

## VIII

The supreme success with which Thackeray turned his personal history to account in *Esmond* may be illustrated by comparing

with the personal element in that novel his earlier attempt to make literary use of his relationship with Mrs. Brookfield in *Pendennis*. This occurs in the Fanny Bolton episode, already considered in chapter four, which has always been a stumbling-block in Thackeray's fiction, even to his convinced admirers.

On February twenty-sixth, 1850, Mrs. Brookfield gave birth to her first child, whom her husband, with even more than usually perverse disregard of conventional prejudice, insisted on christening Magdalene. Thackeray was much moved by this event. "How curious it will be to see you, realizing your nine years' dream at last," he wrote, "with that dear little baby for your constant thought and occupation! . . . I feel like an old woman in thinking about you, and talk as such."<sup>66</sup> When he called to make inquiries about her convalescence, however, he found the door shut to him. Word was brought that Brookfield wished entire privacy and desired him to remain away from the house.

Profoundly hurt, Thackeray left at once for Paris. He did not hold Mrs. Brookfield responsible for what had happened. Indeed, he wrote to assure her that his allegiance was quite unshaken: "Dont fancy that I am come here to forget you, quite the reverse—the chain pulls tighter the farther I am away from you, and I don't want to break it or to be other than my dear sister's most faithful Makepeace to command."<sup>67</sup> Yet he was angry and resentful. While "trying to get his wounds healed," he meditated on the unsatisfactory nature of a relationship liable to abrupt cessation at Brookfield's caprice. The occasion was one of many on which he told himself, in the words of a later letter:

Very likely it's a woman I want more than any particular one: and some day may be investing a trull in the street with that priceless jewel my heart—It is written that a man should have a mate above all things. The want of this natural outlet plays the deuce with me. Why can't I fancy some honest woman to be a titular Mrs. Tomkins?<sup>68</sup>

In this condition of mind he began the current number of *Pendennis*, in which Mrs. Brookfield already figured in the person of his heroine Laura Bell. He contrived an accidental meeting at Vauxhall between his hero, forgetful of Laura as he idled in London, and Fanny Bolton, the pretty daughter of a Shepherd's Inn porter, a young woman with "a great deal of dangerous and rather contagious sensibility," "who has heated her little brain with novels, until her whole thoughts are of love and lovers."<sup>69</sup> A mutual infatuation results; and Thackeray's monthly part

ends with its issue seemingly in doubt. "I wonder what will happen with Pendennis and Fanny Bolton," he wrote to Mrs. Brookfield. "Writing it and sending it to you somehow it seems as if it were true."<sup>70</sup>

Though Thackeray could not resist teasing Mrs. Brookfield, and though he notes in his preface that "subscribers left me, because in the course of the story, I described a young man resisting and affected by temptation,"<sup>71</sup> there was no danger that Fanny would come to harm. In 1850 the treatment of illicit love in English popular literature was controlled by rigid conventions. The influence of women in society was thought to depend primarily on their technical purity, and a seduction in a play or a novel was followed summarily by the death or banishment of the woman and the condign punishment of the man. This is the pattern that Dickens adopts, for example, in the episode of little Em'ly and Steerforth in *David Copperfield*, a novel which appeared concurrently with *Pendennis*. But Steerforth was a secondary character who could be killed after his transgression, while Pen was Thackeray's hero. So he was careful to introduce Sam Huxter, Fanny's destined husband, in the very chapter where she meets Pen. And he was forced to pretend that nothing happens between Pen and Fanny, neither a plausible nor an exciting development.

Thackeray apologized for his tepid handling of this episode, which should properly have been one of the climaxes of his novel, in a famous passage of his preface. "Since the Author of 'Tom Jones' was buried," he contended, "no writer of fiction among us has been permitted to depict to his utmost power a MAN."<sup>72</sup> It is not surprising that Henry James should choose this part of *Pendennis* to support the comment that "The sentimental habit and the spirit of romance, it was unmistakably chargeable, stood out to sea as far as possible the moment the shore [of the real] appeared to offer the least difficulty to hugging, and the Victorian age bristled with perfect occasions for our catching them in the act of this showy retreat."<sup>73</sup>

Yet even given a free hand, it is unlikely that Thackeray would have been able to persuade his readers that Pen was really tempted. So tightly did Mrs. Brookfield's chain bind him at this time that even his fictional rendering of the alternative to his relationship with her was half-hearted and unconvincing. The character of Laura fails, just as does the Fanny Bolton episode, because Thackeray in neither case achieves a perspective that allows the proper assimilation of life to art. An example of the point may

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE NEWCOMES

#### I

In *The Newcomes* Thackeray returned permanently to the mode of writing that he had followed in *Vanity Fair* and *Pendennis*. *Esmond* had met with a mixed reception. At first, it had great success with public and critics alike. Then, three months after its appearance, Thackeray's old enemy, Samuel Phillips, published a slashing review of it in the *Times*. Following his lead, critics generally began to complain of its slowness of pace, its melancholy tone, and the unpleasant nature of its love story. Thackeray came to feel that the pains he had taken with the book were wasted on the sort of readers he had to please, and he determined in the future to write to be popular. Not long after he began *The Newcomes*, he noted :

It goes pretty well : like the other yellow books—not so high-toned or so carefully finished as *Esmond* but that you see was a failure besides being immoral. We must take pains and write careful books when we have made the 10000 for the young ladies.<sup>1</sup>

At first Thackeray was despondent about his ability to recapture the great public even under the easy conditions of serial publication, which permitted him to rely on his old facility as an improviser. "It would be very well if the other books had not preceded," he wrote, "but it is not an advance on them, and a retreat from the high ground occupied in *Esmond*."<sup>2</sup> "I can't but see it is a repetition of past performances, and think that vein is pretty nigh worked out in me."<sup>3</sup> "It seems to me I am too old for story-telling."<sup>4</sup>

But as he continued to write, his confidence in his powers returned. He became sufficiently sure of himself to adhere to his initial plan of establishing each branch of the Newcome family with great elaboration even in the face of agitated complaints from his publishers that his story did not move. By the time his novel was completed, his assurance had entirely returned, and he was eager to embark upon another novel in the same vein.

As Thackeray's richest and most comprehensive panorama of English life, *The Newcomes* would seem to afford ample warrant for its author's confidence. Yet it is read today far less often than *Vanity Fair*, *Esmond*, or even *Pendennis*. Modern readers are apt to find it, in Elizabeth Bowen's phrase, the shell of a great novel,<sup>5</sup> because it lacks a focus of interest sufficient to keep their attention constantly engaged. For Thackeray's contemporaries this focus was provided by the character of Colonel Newcome. Since he, more than any other figure in Thackeray's novels, has suffered from the shift from Victorian to modern taste, it will be particularly enlightening to consider him in terms of his relation to Thackeray's personal history.

While he was writing the last chapters of *The Newcomes* Thackeray met in Paris an American lady with whom he had formed a friendship during his first American lecture tour three years earlier. This was Mrs. George B. Jones, who sent to her sister the following account of their conversation :

Mr. Thackeray . . . was very interesting and inclined to be communicative about his heart troubles—told me a great deal about the *Newcomes* and whence he drew his characters . . . Old Col. Newcome is his step-father, a simple honest old bore who ruined them all by his foolish investments with the most innocent aim in the world. . . . Read the first letter of Madame de Florac. He spoke of it tearfully and said there was more in it than met the eye. He alluded feelingly to his wife and I should judge he had arrived at that stage of calm despair when one is left almost without regret or hope. He loves another, but seeks in the rigid discharge of his duty to his family, to shut out the dangerous contemplation of what might be his happiness. He has been, one can see, a thoroughly disappointed man.<sup>6</sup>

Passing by the evidence this letter affords of Thackeray's continuing love for Mrs. Brookfield and the imprint that it left on his work long after his break with her, let us turn our attention to Colonel Newcome and his "original."

## II

Henry William Carmichael-Smyth was one of the eight sons of the London physician James Carmichael-Smyth.<sup>7</sup> The Carmichaels were an old and distinguished Scottish family, related to the Earls of Hyndford, whose lineage can be traced back to the fourteenth century. Dr. James Carmichael added Smyth to his surname when he succeeded to the estate of Aithernie in Fife on the death of Dr. James Smyth, his maternal grandfather. After a Gretna Green marriage with an heiress in 1775, he embarked on a brilliant medical career in London, conducting valuable experiments in the control of contagious diseases for

which parliament voted him the sum of £5,000, winning election as a Fellow of the Royal Society, and serving as Physician Extraordinary to George the Third.

Dr. Carmichael-Smyth's influential connections enabled him to place all of his eight male children in the army or the East India Company's civil service. The career of his oldest son was even more successful than his own. Commissioned in the Royal Engineers in 1794, James Carmichael-Smyth ultimately attained the rank of Major-General and the colonelcy of his regiment. His most notable military services were rendered in 1814 and 1815, when he planned the attack on Bergen-op-Zoom, and acted as commanding royal engineer on the staff of the Duke of Wellington at Quatre Bras and Waterloo. For these services he was created a baronet in 1821. In later life he was sent on military missions to the West Indies and Canada, and acted as Governor of the Bahama Islands and British Guiana. He died in the latter office during 1838.

Sir James's brothers all had careers of some distinction, two of them rising to be Generals in the Indian army and one becoming a Judge of the Supreme Court in Calcutta. Only William Carmichael-Smyth caused the family serious embarrassment. After some years in the Bengal civil service he returned to England and was made a Paymaster of Exchequer-Bills through his brother's interest. He fulfilled the duties of this office competently for thirteen years; but after his marriage in 1822 his conduct became very peculiar, and in 1824 his superiors found it necessary to dismiss him. He quarrelled with his wife, who had been a Miss Bayford; drove her from his house; and caused circulars entitled "Caution to the Public" to be distributed, in which tradespeople were warned against giving her credit. When her brothers brought suit on her behalf, William issued a circular attacking his "*graceless Bunch of Rue*" and her relatives, which he entitled:

A Bitter Pill for Uncivil Civilians??

"Bray forth Bayford, beware of the day  
When Carmichael shall meet thee in battle array"

In the Consistory Court of London

Smyth v Smyth

*Nemo v Homo*<sup>8</sup>

His later years were spent in the compilation of crazy memorials defending his public and private conduct,<sup>9</sup> but he never regained his lost office and reputation.



There seems, indeed, to have been a touch of eccentricity about all of the Carmichael-Smyths, a fanatical obstinacy in pursuing unconventional lines of conduct that took various forms. Sir James had an almost maniacal devotion to military discipline which made him most unpopular among the Royal Engineers. At his country house of Nutwood in Surrey all meals and other calls were sounded on the bugle. His younger brothers used to amuse themselves while visiting him with a sport that they called "pelting the clods," which consisted of throwing rocks at local farmers until a fight resulted. On one occasion two of the brothers masked themselves and held up the carriage of a younger brother returning from Eton; but the younger brother defended himself fiercely and got away without yielding his purse to the supposed highway robbers. Robert Carmichael-Smyth was involved with Lord Cardigan in the notorious "Black Bottle" row of 1840, an aftermath of which led him into a duel with Captain Tucker at the Cape of Good Hope. Mark Wood Carmichael-Smyth became a Plymouth Brother in later life and annoyed his family by announcing his determination to give away all his possessions as an encouragement to people generally to share everything in common. Stranger still was the behaviour of General Charles Carmichael after his retirement from the army and settlement in London. He was "very liberal," we are told,<sup>10</sup> "but had a habit of saving bits left at the table, putting them aside, and forgetting all about them." He called his modest residence on the Brompton Road, Hyndford House—the earldom of Hyndford having become dormant some years earlier—and used to say grandly to cabbies, "Drive me to Hyndford House." Charles's relatives record with relish the remark that a cabbie was heard to make to a mate on one of these occasions: "Blow me, Bill, where's this 'ere 'Yndford 'Ouse?" Life at Hyndford House was punctuated by daily religious services, to which Charles used to call the housemaids by going to the head of the basement stairs and crying: "Come up, come up, ye pious virgins, and pray."

Despite their eccentricities, however, the Carmichael-Smyths rank high among the many energetic and ambitious Scottish families that left their mark on nineteenth century English life. They were sometimes devoted to learning (both Dr. James and Sir James wrote valuable books on technical subjects, and even poor William's pamphlets testify to considerable erudition), sometimes to the roughest and crudest practical jokes; they served the public with complete integrity, yet without shifting

their gaze from the main chance. They all lived busy, active lives; their outlook was usually simple and practical in the extreme; and however strange their personal peculiarities might be, they remained gentlemen, proud of their lineage and position, who governed themselves by strict notions of honor and *noblesse oblige*.

### III

Henry Carmichael-Smyth was Dr James's second son. The boy was born in 1780 and educated at Charterhouse school.<sup>11</sup> Early in 1797 he joined the India army with a commission as Ensign of engineers. It was six years before he saw action, the intervening period being passed chiefly as Assistant Engineer at Allahabad: but in 1803 he joined Lord Lake's army with the rank of Lieutenant. During the second Maratha War he was present at the storm and capture of Aligarh, the battle of Delhi, and the battle of Laswari in 1803; the taking of Rampura and the battle and capture of Dieg in 1804; and the siege of Bhurtpore in 1805. His work at Dieg led Lord Lake to mention his "peculiar merit" in a dispatch to the Marquess Wellesley; and he later received the India Medal for his services at Bhurtpore. In 1806 he participated in the operations against the Rana of Gohad and was present at the capture of Gohad Fort. Even when he was not in the field, his life was hazardous enough. "He went out to dinner one night," family records relate, "with only his sword on—they always went armed—, when he was attacked by robbers. He killed one, wounded another, and the third ran away."

Lieutenant Carmichael-Smyth returned to England in October, 1807 on a medical certificate. He met Anne Becher while visiting Bath during the following year. He was then twenty-seven and she fifteen. Their courtship followed the pattern of Othello's; and he might have said, as did the Moor of Desdemona:

She lov'd me for the dangers I had pass'd,  
And I lov'd her that she did pity them.

But Anne's grandmother did not intend that her lovely charge should marry a younger son of uncertain prospects, and she refused to permit their engagement. Henry followed Anne back to her home at Fareham. What there occurred is related by Mrs. Fuller, Anne's great-granddaughter:

Their secret trysting place, was a terrace at the end of the Bechers' garden, past which flowed the broad tidal river which skirts the town. Here Anne

was accustomed to wait for the boat that brought her lover. But their meetings were discovered, and Anne was ordered to her room, where she was kept under lock and key until she would give her word of honour that she would not again see Ensign [actually Lieutenant] Carmichael-Smyth. With this order she refused to comply, and she was supported in her confinement by the letters which the Ensign managed to smuggle to her by a maid, and to which she replied by the same agent.

Then suddenly the letters ceased, and one day old Mrs. Becher hobbled into her granddaughter's room and told her to muster all her courage to bear a great blow; the Ensign had died of a sudden fever and on his death-bed had sent her messages of his undying love. Anne pined and mourned in silence. After a time a family council decided that the broken-hearted young woman should be sent out to India as soon as possible<sup>12</sup>

Anne accordingly returned to Calcutta with her mother, Mrs. Butler, in the spring of the following year. Henry's leave terminated in June of 1810, and by December of that year he too was again in India. He was now a Captain and held the important post of Garrison Engineer at Agra. In March, 1811, he embarked with an expedition to Java. There he participated in the action at Weltevreden and in the reduction of the fortified lines at Cornelist in August. After the surrender of the island in September, he and the other officers received medals from the Prince Regent for their parts in the campaign. In February of the following year he was employed as Field Engineer in the reduction of Kalinjar Fort. A proclamation of the Governor-General in Council of March, 1812, refers to "the exemplary valour displayed by Capt. Smyth, the directing engineer, on the morning of the 2d. ult."

Before resuming his duties as Garrison Engineer at Agra, Captain Carmichael-Smyth spent some time in Calcutta. There he met Richmond Thackeray, who invited him home one night for dinner. Thus he and Anne Becher, now Mrs. Thackeray, were brought together abruptly and without warning. After dinner an explanation occurred. Mrs. Thackeray had been told that her lover had died from a sudden fever. Captain Carmichael-Smyth had been informed by Mrs. Becher that Anne no longer cared for him and had broken their engagement; all his letters had been returned to him unopened. He had much to consider when he departed soon thereafter for Agra. Though he knew that he was still loved, it seemed unlikely that he and Anne would ever be united.

Three years later, however, Richmond Thackeray died. His widow did not return to England with her son, because she had determined to marry Captain Carmichael-Smyth as soon as she decently could. Their wedding took place on 13 March 1817,<sup>13</sup> a year and a half to the day after Richmond Thackeray's death.

The Carmichael-Smyths then settled down together in Agra for three years. When they returned to England early in 1820, the Captain had completed twenty years of distinguished service in India.

Like most returned Anglo-Indians, the Carmichael-Smyths were disappointed in their mother-country. Three months after her arrival, Anne wrote to Mrs. Butler in India :

England is very delightful the climate fine, the Country Paradise, but the people ! the people are not Indians, they live for themselves, we live for our friends & I dont think in a whole life I should ever make such a friend as a few months in your kinder land has given me.<sup>14</sup>

Nor was the reserve of the English all that Anne had to complain of. "The secret is," she wrote, "we live in India as people in this Country do who now spend £3000 a year and then come home to live upon one."<sup>15</sup> "It's more for Henry than herself," her sister Maria explained. "He of course would feel some degree of mortification to see his Elder Brother living in a style of splendor and himself limited as he must be in almost all his wishes."<sup>16</sup>

Not that there was any failure in hospitality on the part of Henry's father. Dr. James Carmichael-Smyth at once invited the couple to make their home at "the old Chateau," as he called his country house at Charlton, a few miles outside of London. He made Anne "quite mistress of the house"<sup>17</sup>—he had long been a widower—, and would take nothing from them towards the expenses of the establishment. Anne was delighted with him. "The good old Father is exactly what I expected," she wrote, "full of good humour firm spirits his conversation replete with elegant wit & strong sense."<sup>18</sup>

Anne and Henry continued to make the Chateau their home until the death of Dr. Carmichael-Smyth in 1821. It meant a great deal to Henry to have this year at Charlton. "His poor Father has often told me," Anne wrote, "Harry is my only child who never did a thing that I could have wished done otherwise, I believe there is not a happier Father in the world than I am but impartial as my feelings are & proud as I am of them all, there is not one whom I can compare to Harry."<sup>19</sup> Though only a second son, Henry's financial position was considerably improved by his father's death ; and when he received his majority and a consequent increase in half-pay later in 1821, it came to seem less essential that he return to India, as he had originally planned.

## IV

For two years Major Carmichael-Smyth served as Superintendent of the East India Company's Military Seminary at Addiscombe. Then he retired from the army and settled with his wife at Larkbeare House, near Ottery St. Mary in Devon. It was during these years that Thackeray became intimately acquainted with his stepfather. Major Carmichael-Smyth was a small, spare, erect man, solemn and reserved. His simplicity and candor, his freedom from personal vanity (he would never talk about his military exploits), and his natural kindness and dignity made him a model of gentlemanliness to the boy. And so he was to remain in Thackeray's eyes. "I have never seen finer gentlefolks than you two," Thackeray told his mother after he came to know London society well many years later.<sup>20</sup>

Though the Major commanded Thackeray's respect and admiration from the first, the two were hardly congenial in taste or temperament. Major Carmichael-Smyth was by no means of a literary turn. His ponderous and sober intelligence leaned rather towards such matter as the reports of parliamentary debates, concerning which, as an extreme radical, he took strong views. Family tradition records that after his removal to France a few years later, he underlined his resolute John Bullishness and his contempt for the Napoleonic tradition by walking the streets of Paris with a little dog which he christened "Waterloo" and continually called to heel by that name. Yet disparate as they were, Thackeray and the Major for many years got along well enough; and the man's stolid manliness no doubt helped to prevent the boy from becoming the "muff and milksop" that maternal dominance made of Ruskin.<sup>21</sup>

Even so, their relationship did not remain entirely unaffected by the overcharged emotional atmosphere that clung round Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth's passionate personality. His wife's first marriage had left the Major with an uneasy jealousy which he could never altogether suppress. He was absorbed in his wife; he treated her with great deference; he faithfully adopted all of her enthusiasms without question or protest. For example, though he was himself in a state of rude health, he followed each of the regimens prescribed for the ailing Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth by a series of favorite doctors. Thackeray describes him in 1841 taking the water-cure with his wife, and goes on to comment:

In the last twenty years he has been successively a convert to Abernethy's blue-pills, of wh. he swallowed pounds—to Morison's ditto—wh. he flung in by

spoonfuls to Sr John Long to whom he paid 100 guineas for rubbing an immense sore on & then off his back, to Homeopathy wh. put the nose of all other systems of medicine out of joint, and finally to Hydrosudopathy<sup>22</sup>

The Major could not avoid feeling some resentment at his wife's absorption in her son; nor could Thackeray himself escape some sense of friction. "There's something immodest in the marriage of an elderly woman with children," he wrote many years afterwards. "How disgusted I have felt at hearing my old GP snoring in my mother's room."<sup>23</sup>

It devolved upon the Major to safeguard the family's financial welfare. A child in the world of affairs, he failed to take proper advice in the Indian financial crises of 1833. In consequence most of Thackeray's fortune (nearly £12,000 it would appear), as well as a good part of his own, was swept away in the failure of the Calcutta agency houses during that year. Seeking to compensate his stepson for his negligence and to recoup his own losses, he three years later put most of his remaining resources into *The Constitutional*, a new radical newspaper for which Thackeray acted as Paris correspondent. The paper failed a little more than five months after its first issue appeared. Their income further diminished by this second calamity, Major Carmichael-Smyth and his wife withdrew to Paris, where living was inexpensive and whither troublesome creditors could not follow them.

There the Major pursued fortune through inventions rather than investments. He was an indefatigable projector. His mind ran constantly on mechanical contrivances that were to make the family rich. He had "a room full of chemical experiments, barrels of beer, bottles, old German dictionaries and medical works";<sup>24</sup> where, family tradition tells us, he designed a steam carriage that in some respects anticipated the automobile. The one invention concerning which detailed information has survived does not inspire confidence in his methods.

My granduncle [so Lady Ritchie calls the Major in her story "Across the Peat-Fields"], who was of an ingenious turn of mind, had come to Visey to try a machine he had invented, and to make experiments in the manufacture of peat-fuel. It is certain that with his machine, and the help of an old woman and a boy, he could produce as many little square blocks of firing in a day as M. Morard, the rival manufacturer, in three, with all his staff, including his cook and his carter's son. It is true that our machine cost about 300*l.* to start with, and that it was constantly getting out of order and requiring the doctoring of a Paris engineer; but setting this aside . . . it was clear that a saving of 35 per cent. was effected by our process.

The engineer from Paris having failed us on two occasions, I believe that my granduncle had at one time serious thoughts of constructing a mechanical engineer

who was to keep the whole thing in order, and only to require an occasional poke himself to continue going.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the reduced circumstances in which he and his wife were forced to live, despite the failure of his inventions, the Major was happy enough in his Parisian retirement. Lady Ritchie, who lived with the Carmichael-Smyths during most of the eighteen-forties, has left an engaging picture of the Major among his household gods.

I don't think we ever came home from one of our walks [she writes] that we did not find our grandfather sitting watching for our grandmother's return. We used to ask him if he didn't find it very dull doing nothing in the twilight, but he used to tell us it was his thinking-time. . . . A good deal of thinking went on in our peaceful home, we should have liked more doing. One day was just like another; my grandmother and my grandfather sat on either side of the hearth in their two accustomed places, there was a French cook in a white cap, who brought in the trays and the lamp at the appointed hour. . . . We lived in a sunny little flat on a fourth floor with the windows east and west and a wide horizon from each, and the sound of the cries from the street below, and the confusing roll of the wheels when the windows were open in the summer. In winter time we dined at five by lamplight at the round table in my grandfather's study. After dinner we used to go into the pretty blue drawing-room, where the peat fire would be burning brightly in the open grate, and the evening papers would come in with the tea. . . . On the band of the *Constitutional* newspaper was printed 'M le Major Michel Eschmid.' It was not my grandfather's name or anything like it, but he would gravely say that when English people lived in France they must expect to have their names gallicised, and his paper certainly found him out evening after evening. While my grandmother with much emphasis read the news (she was a fervent republican, and so was my grandfather), my sister and I would sit unconscious of politics and happy over our story-books, until the fatal inevitable moment when a ring was heard at the bell and evening callers were announced. . . .

The ladies would come in their bonnets, with their news and their comments upon the public events. . . . Ours was a talkative, economical, and active little society. *Cranford en Voyage* is the impression that remains to me of those early surroundings. If the ladies were one and all cordially attached to my grandmother, to my grandfather they were still more devoted. A Major is a Major. He used to sign their pension papers, administer globules for their colds, give point and support to their political opinions. I can see him still sitting in his armchair by the fire with a little semicircle round about the hearth.<sup>26</sup>

After Thackeray's wife lost her mind in 1840, he was occasionally a part of this society, which he found even more irksome than did his girls. Expressions of annoyance at having to "drag about in this confounded little Pedlington"<sup>27</sup> dot his letters. He did not blame his mother for its dullness; but a tinge of acerbity began to color his references to his stepfather. "There is that stupid old Governor of mine": he told FitzGerald in 1841, "we are always on the point of quarreling, though we never do."<sup>28</sup> "He is a worthy man however," Thackeray

continued; and indeed his exasperation with the Major never really clouded his admiration for him. Comparing his own sensitive and erratic nature with that of his stepfather, he told his mother not long afterward:

Depend upon it, a good honest kindly man not cursed by a genius, that doesn't prate about his affections, and cries very little, and loves his home—he is the real man to go through the world with. Look at G.P. and his steadiness of heart, with love for working-days as well as Sundays. How much superior that sort of enduring character and manliness is, to all our flashy touch-and-go theorizing about love. . . . I feel respect and attachment for him.<sup>29</sup>

During the middle eighteen-forties Thackeray on more than one occasion suggested to the Carmichael-Smyths that they return to London. After the success of *Vanity Fair* he paid off the Major's debts. "G.P. is no longer a Robin Hood," he told his mother—in the hope that his stepfather might agree to leave France; but Major Carmichael-Smyth would not budge. His jealous desire to be first in his wife's affections and his dislike of giving up the consideration he enjoyed in his little Parisian circle for an insignificant place in the household of his brilliant stepson were strong motives for remaining abroad.

Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth longed to join her grandchildren in England; and she found life with her elderly husband increasingly difficult. In the year after he finished *The Newcomes* Thackeray sent Mrs. Eliot the following account of her situation:

My dear old folks keep me in endless perplexity—indeed when didn't they? It's small comfort I get out of the anxious loves, jealousies, glooms, despondencies of that poor old Mother, to whom we're always going, and who is always miserable at parting from us, or in grief for one cause or another. That most faithful uxorious exacting old gentleman weighs down her life with his dullness—cares for no amusement but his fireside, and to talk stupid articles out of the news-paper, doesn't like much talking or too many candles even in his room—keeps us all mum and dismal—I don't want to live to be 76, if 76 is to be no better fun than that. . . . [It is] small fun—for us and for that poor old Bird who has paired with my maternal hen these forty years, and feels that he has no business in our nest at all. I fear actually for my mother's reason. Her nerves have broken right down. She is sleepless unless amused, and he won't let her be amused.<sup>30</sup>

Yet even so, Thackeray's last word about his stepfather is not, "Superfluous lags the vet'ran on the stage."

You see what you do when you marry, [he told his daughters]—what slaves you become—well? and what immense happiness you enjoy I daresay with the right man. These folks' pleasure has no doubt been very greatly increased during 40 years by their living together—the bottom of the cup is rather bitter. So may other dregs be.<sup>31</sup>



## V

In transferring his stepfather from life to the pages of *The Newcomes* Thackeray provided a sufficiently faithful portrait.<sup>32</sup> We find him noting two years after the novel was finished that Major Carmichael-Smyth "grows to be more and more like Colonel Newcome every day."<sup>33</sup> But there is an element in Colonel Newcome missing from most of Thackeray's other portraits from life. His character is, as Thackeray remarked, *consciously* "angelicised."<sup>34</sup> This "angelicising" took two forms. Major Carmichael-Smyth personified for Thackeray a kind of man for whom he had particular admiration. He saw in him what Ruskin speaks in *Praeterita* of seeing in his friend Major Edward Matson, "such a calm type of truth, gentleness, and simplicity, as I myself have found in soldiers or sailors only," a character who almost reconciled him "to the national guilt of war, seeing that such men were made by the discipline of it."<sup>35</sup> But Colonel Newcome is not merely an epitome of the military virtues; he also represents Thackeray's attempt to provide in his fiction a parallel to certain characters in earlier novels whom he had long admired, to such models of manly simplicity and ingenuousness as Don Quixote (he read through Cervantes' masterpiece while writing the early numbers of *The Newcomes*), Parson Adams, and Dr. Primrose.

Due allowance made for this exceptional element of idealization the picture that Thackeray draws of Colonel Newcome in the first third of his novel is essentially that which he himself entertained of his stepfather during his own boyhood. The Colonel's history is similar to that of Major Carmichael-Smyth. It includes, for example, education at Grey Friars (that is, Charterhouse), a brief early love passage with a girl destined to a more eligible suitor, and a long career of distinguished service in the Indian army, during which he sees action in the battle of Laswari and the siege of Bhurtpore during the second Maratha War.<sup>36</sup>

When we first meet Colonel Newcome, he has returned to England after a thirty-five year absence. The leading aspects of his character are admirably displayed in the opening episode of the novel, which is surely one of the great scenes of English fiction. The Colonel has brought his boy Clive to the "Cave of Harmony," a London tavern which in his youth had been the haunt of "the wits," of Richard Brinsley Sheridan and of Professor Porson. During the third of a century since the Colonel last visited it, however, the "Cave of Harmony" has fallen

on evil days; its clientele has become less select, and its tone has coarsened. Yet out of deference to his unaccustomed visitors Hoskins, the proprietor, is for a time able to suppress the dubious elements in his entertainment; and the Colonel is entranced with what he finds.

'I say, Clive': [he says to his son] 'this is d-ightful . . . I shall come here often.' . . . He became quite excited over his sherry-and-water--('I'm sorry to see you, gentlemen, drinking brandy-pawn e,' says he. 'It plays the deuce with our young men in India'.) He joined in all the choruses with an exceedingly sweet voice. He laughed at the 'Derby Ran' so that it did you good to hear him; and when Hoskins sang (as he did admin- bly) the 'Old English Gentleman,' and described, in measured cadence, the death of that venerable aristocrat, tears trickled down the honest warrior's cheek, while he held out his hand to Hoskins and said, 'Thank you sir, for that song, it is an honour to human nature.' On which Hoskins began to cry too.<sup>37</sup>

Shortly thereafter the Colonel himself volunteers to sing "Wapping Old Stairs," much to the surprise of the assembled company and the embarrassment of his son.

He sang this quaint and charming old song [Tuckeray tells us] in an exceedingly pleasant voice, with flourishes and roulades in the old Incedon manner, which has pretty nearly passed away. The singer gave his heart and soul to the simple ballad, and delivered Molly's gentle appeal so pathetically that even the professional gentlemen hummed and buzzed a sincere applause, and some wags who were inclined to jeer at the beginning of the performance, clinked their glasses and rapped their sticks with quite a respectful enthusiasm. When the song was over, Clive held up his head too; after the shock of the first verse, looked round with surprise and pleasure in his eyes, and we, I need not say, backed our friend, delighted to see him come out of his queer scrape so triumphantly. The colonel bowed and smiled with very pleasant good nature at our plaudits. It was like Dr. Primrose preaching his sermon in the prison. There was something touching in the *naïveté* and kindness of the placid and simple gentleman.<sup>38</sup>

For a time it seems as though unaccustomed sweetness and light would prevail in the "Cave of Harmony" throughout the evening. But as the Colonel finishes his song, Captain Costigan, a drunken habitué of the tavern, rolls in. He is altogether beyond Hoskins's control; and no sooner does he procure himself a glass of whisky-and-water, than he begins one of "his prime songs":

The unlucky wretch, who scarcely knew what he was doing or saying, selected one of the most outrageous performances of his repertoire, fired off a tippy howl by way of overture, and away he went. At the end of the second verse the colonel started up, clapping on his hat, seizing his stick, and looking as ferocious as though he had been going to do battle with a Pindaroo. 'Silence!' he roared out. 'Hear, hear!' cried certain wags at a farther table. 'Go on, Costigan!' said others.

'Go on!' cries the colonel, in his high voice, trembling with anger. 'Does any gentleman say "Go on"? Does any man who has a wife and sisters, or children at home, say "Go on" to such disgusting ribaldry as this? Do you

dare, sir, to call yourself a gentleman, and to say that you hold the king's commission, and to sit down amongst Christians and men of honour, and defile the ears of young boys with this wicked balderdash ?'

'Why do you bring young boys here, old boy ?' cries a voice of the ma<sup>1</sup> contents. 'Why ? Because I thought I was coming to a society of gentlemen.' cried out the indignant colonel. 'Because I never could have believed that Englishmen could meet together and allow a man, and an old man, so to disgrace himself. For shame, you old wretch ! Go home to your bed, you hoary old sinner ! And for my part, I'm not sorry that my son should see, for once in his life, to what shame and degradation and dishonour, drunkenness and whisky may bring a man. Never mind the change, sir !—Curse the change !' says the colonel, facing the amazed waiter. 'Keep it till you see me in this place again : which will be never —by George, never !' And shouldering his stick, and scowling round at the company of scared bacchanals, the indignant gentleman stalked away, his boy after him.

Clive seemed rather shamefaced ; but I fear the rest of the company looked still more foolish.

'Aussi quo diable venait-il faire dans cette galère ?' says King of Corpus to Jones of Trinity, and Jones gave a shrug of his shoulders, which were smarting, perhaps, for that uplifted cane of the colonel's had somehow fallen on the back of every man in the room.<sup>39</sup>

The aspects of Colonel Newcome's character suggested in this scene are elaborately developed in the chapters that follow. We are given a hundred examples of his simplicity, his gentleness, his generosity. We see how firm are his principles and how rigidly he observes them. And at the same time we are made aware of the extreme narrowness of his horizon : his total lack of worldly wisdom, his quaint notions about literature and the arts, and his old-world views as to the innate superiority of the gentleman. The attitude of amused respect that Thackeray displays towards Colonel Newcome in these early chapters harks back to his attitude towards Major Carmichael-Smyth before he reached the age of criticism. It is best summed up in his account of Clive's relations with his father :

Mr. Clive had a very fine natural sense of humour which played perpetually round his father's simple philosophy, with kind and smiling comments. Between this pair of friends the superiority of wit lay, almost from the very first, on the younger man's side. but, on the other hand, Clive felt a tender admiration for his father's goodness, a loving delight in contemplating his elder's character, which he has never lost.<sup>40</sup>

By the time the novel was a third completed, however, Thackeray had grown a little tired of Colonel Newcome. "The Colonel is going to India the day after tomorrow," he told Mrs. Proctor while writing the eighth monthly part of his novel. "You'll be glad to hear that I know. He is a dear old boy but confess you think he is rather a twaddler ?"<sup>41</sup> As he wrote the following number, Thackeray noted : "The story seems to breathe freely after the departure of the dear old boy."<sup>42</sup>

## VI

Not until his novel was nearly two-thirds over did Thackeray bring the Colonel back to England; and after his reappearance in monthly number sixteen, he is presented in a new light. In these later chapters Thackeray views him very much as in maturity he regarded his stepfather. Affection and admiration remain, but the forbearance that had previously led him to pass over shortcomings in silence has disappeared. The attitude of exasperated resignation that Colonel Newcome now aroused in Thackeray is illustrated in a story told of him while he was a guest of George Eliot's friends, the Brays, at Coventry.

When they asked him whether he had a good night, he answered, 'How could I with Colonel Newcome making a fool of him self as he has done?' MRS. BRAY. 'But why did you let him?' THACKERAY. 'Oh, it was in him to do it. He must.'<sup>43</sup>

The Colonel's sole motive is to make his son happy. But he does not understand Clive's nature, and his benefactions fail entirely of their intended effect. He believes that a young man should live the life of a gentleman. Clive must accordingly give up painting, the only occupation that interests him. He believes that a young man should settle in life. When the Colonel cannot win for Clive his cousin Ethel, the girl that he loves, he must accordingly marry Rosey Mackenzie, with whom he has nothing in common. He believes that a young man should take his due place in the world. Clive must accordingly live in a fine house, entertain dull people on an extravagant scale, and feign an interest in the affairs of the Indian banking company which is the source of his father's fortune. All the Colonel's fond wishes are gratified by his son, with the result that the two are miserable together.

We don't understand each other, [says Clive, in words that Thackeray might have used to describe his relations with Major Carmichael-Smyth] but we feel each other as it were by instinct. Each thinks in his own way, but knows what the other is thinking. We fight mute battles, don't you see, and our thoughts, though we don't express them, are perceptible to one another, and come out from our eyes, or pass out from us somehow, and meet, and fight, and strike, and wound.<sup>44</sup>

The narrowing effects of the Colonel's simplicity, of his inability to comprehend any side of a question except his own, are evident again in his failure of magnanimity towards Ethel and Barnes Newcome. Ethel becomes the embodiment of worldliness to him because she has given up Clive for a wealthier

suitor, though her motives for this action are in part very creditable. Because Barnes had deceived him, while there still seemed some hope that his sister might marry Clive, the Colonel nurses his nephew with an implacable animosity which arouses in the reader something like sympathy even for this irritating young man.

Time was when the colonel . . . would have viewed his kinsman more charitably [Thackeray writes], but fate and circumstance had angered that originally friendly and gentle disposition : hate and suspicion had mastered him, and if it cannot be said that his now life had changed him, at least it had brought out faults for which there had hitherto been no occasion, and qualities latent before.<sup>45</sup>

But life holds in store for the Colonel experiences that are to purify him of his hate and anger. His prosperity does not last. His Indian banking firm fails. He is reduced abruptly to penury, a misfortune that he could have met alone with cheerful fortitude, for his tastes are frugal, and he liked the grand existence into which success had forced him as little as did Clive. But he has been so bad a man of business as to have made no provision for those dependent on him ; and Clive's family as well is left with almost nothing to live on. From this circumstance derives the Colonel's purgatory. He is forced to drag out a wretched existence in a squalid Boulogne lodging house, tormented by the wrong-headed reproaches of Clive's mother-in-law, the terrible "Campaigner." In such a passage as the following Thackeray wrings the final bitterness from time's revenges.

He had no money, Thomas Newcome. He gave up every farthing. After having impoverished all around him, he had no right, he said, to touch a sixpence of the wretched pittance remaining to them—he had even given up his cigar, the poor old man, the companion and comforter of forty years. He was 'not fit to be trusted with money,' Mrs. Mackenzie said, and the good man owned, as he ate his scanty crust, and bowed his noble old head in silence under that cowardly persecution.

And this, at the end of three score and seven or eight years, was to be the close of a life which had been spent in freedom and splendour, and kindness and honour ; this is the reward of a noble heart—the tomb and prison of a gallant warrior who had ridden in twenty battles—whose course through life had been a bounty wherever it had passed—whose name had been followed by blessings, and whose career was to end here—here—in a mean room, in a mean alley of a foreign town—a low furious woman standing over him and stabbing the kind defenceless breast with killing insult and daily outrage !

. . . Clive . . . wondered the old man lived . . . Some of the woman's taunts and jibes, as he could see, struck his father so that he gasped and started back as if some one had lashed him with a whip. 'He would make away with himself,' said poor Clive, 'but he deems this is his punishment, and that he must bear it as long as it pleases God.'<sup>46</sup>

The Colonel's ordeal lasts for a year, long enough to shatter his health and break his spirit. He escapes from the "Campaigner" at last, to the care—as his friends think—of a sister-in-law at Brighton to whom he had been kind in earlier years. Only when Pendennis attends a Founder's Day dinner at Grey Friars, is it discovered what course the old gentleman has actually adopted. This scene is the real culmination of the book. At the beginning of the novel, when the Colonel first returns from India, the reader glimpses him for a moment at his old school, before he begins to test the promise of life at home, about which he has been dreaming during a third of a century's exile.

Under the great archway of the hospital he could look at the old Gothic building, and a black-gowned pensioner or two crawling over the quiet square, or passing from one dark arch to another. The boarding-houses of the school were situated in the square hard by the more ancient buildings of the hospital. A great noise of shouting, crying, clapping fannies and cupboards, treble voices, bass voices, poured out of the schoolboys' windows: their life, bustle, and gaiety, contrasted strangely with the quiet of those old men, creeping along in their black gowns under the ancient arches yonder, whose struggle of life was over, whose hope and noise and bustle had sunk into that grey calm. There was Thomas Newcome arrived at the middle of life, standing between the shouting boys and the tottering seniors.<sup>47</sup>

Twenty years later, as the novel draws to its close, Thackeray's contrasting use of the same setting intensifies the quiet irony of his climactic scene.

Yonder sit forty cherry-cheeked boys, thinking about home and holidays tomorrow. Yonder sit some three-score old gentlemen pensioners of the hospital, listening to the prayers and the psalms. . . . A plenty of candles lights up this chapel, and this scene of age and youth, and early memories, and pompous death. How solemn the well-remembered prayers are, here uttered again in the place where in childhood we used to hear them! How beautiful and decorous the rite, how noble the ancient words of the supplications which the priest utters, and to which generations of fresh children and troops of bygone seniors have cried Amen under those Arches! The service for Founder's Day is a special one; one of the psalms selected being the thirty-seventh, and we hear—

23. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way.

24. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.

25. I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.

As we came to this verse, I chanced to look up from my book towards the swarm of black-coated pensioners: and amongst them—amongst them—sat Thomas Newcome.

His dear old head was bent down over his Prayerbook; there was no mistaking him. He wore the black gown of the pensioners of the Hospital of Grey Friars. His Order of the Bath was on his breast. He stood there amongst the poor brethren, uttering the responses to the psalm. The steps of this good man had been ordered hither by heaven's decree: to this Alms-house! Here it was ordained that a life all-love, and kindness and honour should end! I heard no more of prayers, and psalms, and sermon, after that.<sup>48</sup>

Once again it may be remarked that such passages as this, in which Thackeray glances at our common human lot while passing judgment on the events of his fictional history, have endured much better than his more florid effects, such as the famous scene of the Colonel's death, which was once regarded as inferior only to that of Lear's.<sup>49</sup> Yet the narrative of the Colonel's gradual euthanasia is not really superfluous or anticlimactic. We still have to be shown how the old man's ordeal entirely purges him of pride, obstinacy, and vindictiveness; how he lives out his brief span of life quite contentedly at Grey Friars, absorbed in his pensioner's routine and his grandchild; how even the abuse of the "Campaigner," to which he is occasionally subjected, no longer disturbs him; since he has slipped into second childishness and can escape at will into the past. Thus the episode of his death, although susceptible to severe criticism when considered out of context, is moving enough when read in the setting of the two chapters which led up to it: for in them Thackeray has shown at length exactly how it is that Thomas Newcome's heart becomes "as that of a little child."<sup>50</sup>

## VII

The response of successive generations of Thackeray's readers to Colonel Newcome has followed the same pattern that we have already noted with regard to Amelia and to Helen Penderennis. Of all Thackeray's characters he was the supreme favorite with the Victorian public. He was regarded as finally vindicating Thackeray from the charges of cynicism and misanthropy that had been brought against him on the basis of his earlier work. "There has never been a nobler sketch than that of the Colonel," we read in *Blackwood's Magazine*, "The innocent heart and simple honour of this old man, and his horror of all falsehood and impurity, are enough to cover a multitude of Mr. Thackeray's sins."<sup>51</sup> The *Times* reviewer was still more categorical in his praise: "The real hero of his story, Colonel Newcome, is conceived and executed in a spirit that has never been excelled. He is a noble creation, worthy of any age, or of any reputation, present or past. . . . Upon the creation of this character Mr. Thackeray may rest his fame."<sup>52</sup>

Indeed, so profound was the admiration of Thackeray's contemporaries for the Colonel that he was more than once reproved for not entertaining sufficient respect for his creation.

His illustrator Dicky Doyle was distressed because Thackeray seemed to him to look down upon the Colonel for not being a man about town.<sup>53</sup> It disturbed Hawthorne that Thackeray should be able to bring himself to read the scene of the Colonel's death in a "Cider Cellar" not unlike the "Cave of Harmony" over a glass of gin-and-water.<sup>54</sup> Admirers in Philadelphia could not believe that the novelist was serious when he told them that Dickens's Dan'l Peggotty was "a finer gentleman" than Colonel Newcome.<sup>55</sup> This attitude persisted to the end of the century. Stevenson, for example, was even more unmeasured in his praise of Colonel Newcome than Thackeray's contemporaries had been :

A gentleman came from his [Thackeray's] pen by the gift of nature . . . He could draw him—the next thing to the work of God—human and fine and noble and frail, in Colonel Newcome. If the art of being a gentleman were forgotten, like the art of staining glass, it might be learned anew from that one character. It is learned there, I daresay, daily. . . . What experience is more formative, what step of life is more efficient, than to know and weep for Colonel Newcome ?<sup>56</sup>

Modern critics, on the other hand, have been very severe with the Colonel. Charles Whibley holds that "he carries unselfishness to the point of inhumanity ; his generosity, his kindness, his folly are all too great for flesh and blood. . . . [he is] the travesty of a man."<sup>57</sup> Sir Osbert Sitwell speaks of "that revolting prig and paragon, Colonel Newcome, the epitome of the Old School Tie."<sup>58</sup> George Bernard Shaw finds in him a signal example of the enslavement of Thackeray's mind to conventional Victorian standards. Yet Shaw admits that Thackeray tells the truth in spite of himself.

He exhausts all his feeble pathos in trying to make you sorry for the death of Col. Newcome, imploring you to regard him as a noble-hearted gentleman, instead of an insufferable old fool . . . but he gives you the facts about him faithfully.<sup>59</sup>

Such criticisms as those of Whibley and Sitwell may be discounted because they are plainly based on an incomplete understanding of Thackeray's novel. As we have seen, the Colonel during a large part of *The Newcomes* is anything but a paragon ; Thackeray is at great pains to show in detail his stupidity, his obstinacy, and his vindictiveness. But the terms of Shaw's judgment perhaps point the way to a just estimate of Colonel Newcome. Shaw grants the fidelity with which Thackeray's portrait adheres to the realities of human nature. Thackeray tells the truth, he gives the facts. Interpreting Shaw's reference to Thackeray's "enslaved mind" in the light



of another Shavian proposition, that "the real slavery of today is slavery to ideals of goodness,"<sup>60</sup> we find that Shaw is really taking issue with Thackeray over the latter's display of affection for the Colonel, his determination to apotheosize him despite the revelation that he has himself provided of the Colonel's failings. The relation of Colonel Newcome to Thackeray's personal history, Thackeray's identification of him with Major Carmichael-Smyth to whom he remained loyal even while recognizing his many shortcomings, explains Thackeray's seemingly perverse adherence to an ideal of goodness of which he had so clearly demonstrated the deficiencies. We may regret Thackeray's failure to provide a detached estimate of the principal figure of his novel; but our regret should not prevent us from realizing that the Colonel is one of his supreme achievements in character creation, an achievement, moreover, possible to him only because of the insight that he gained through emotional attachment. Perhaps the last word on this subject may be left to Anthony Trollope, who writes in his *Autobiography*:

I know no character in fiction, unless it be Don Quixote, with whom the reader becomes so intimately acquainted as with Colonel Newcombe. How great a thing it is to be a gentleman at all parts! How we admire the man of whom so much may be said with truth! Is there any one of whom we feel more sure in this respect than of Colonel Newcombe? It is not because Colonel Newcombe is a perfect gentleman that we think Thackeray's work to have been so excellent, but because he has had the power to describe him as such, and to force us to love him, a weak and silly old man, on account of this grace of character.<sup>61</sup>

CHAPTER EIGHT  
THE BURIED LIFE

I

During the last decade of his life Thackeray was an established celebrity. Though he made two long lecture tours in America and travelled a good deal on the continent, London remained his home. He spent his leisure hours among his family and intimate friends, in London society, and in the bohemian haunts of his literary and artistic familiars. When he undertook the editorship of the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1859, his hair had been white for several years, his two daughters were young ladies, and he was generally regarded as an old man. His death in 1863 surprised and shocked his intimates, but did not astonish his great host of readers, who found it difficult to believe that he was only fifty-two.

Thackeray had said good-by to his youth at the conclusion of the Brookfield affair. Describing himself ruefully to his friends as an extinct volcano, he settled down to making fatherhood the principal concern of his life. He wrote to his mother in 1855 :

Why, perhaps it is better than the wife whose want has made me so uncomfortable these many years past. I have 2 little wives not jealous of each other ; and am at last most comfortable in my *harem*.<sup>1</sup>

The months of unrest that followed his break with Mrs. Brookfield produced a state of mental exhaustion that combined with the physical distress of his disease-racked body to render a smoother, less hectic existence essential to him. He organized his life about one objective, to replace the patrimony he had lost as a young man in order to leave his daughters sufficiently provided for. He ceased to live dangerously and became, in Edward FitzGerald's phrase, "a sad Epicurean—just desirous to keep on the windy side of bother & pain."<sup>2</sup>

Success and popularity brought new friends and new responsibilities. His lecture tours impressed Thackeray with the fact

that thousands of readers all over the world regarded him with affection and respect. Always extraordinarily sensitive to what others thought of him, he tried as he never had before, to be agreeable and inoffensive in his writings. The lectures themselves bear witness to a relaxation in his standards of candor and trenchancy. He wrote to his daughter Anne in 1853; "perhaps this lecturing is not truth but a certain dexterous & showy manner of accommodating truth to circumstances."<sup>3</sup> And a few months later he was referring to his performances in disgust as "this ambulatory quack business."<sup>4</sup> But he could make money more rapidly by lecturing than in any other way, and he went on with it as long as his health permitted.

Thackeray's anxiety to make a fortune for his daughters, to conserve a little physical and mental energy that remained to him, and to conciliate his friends and admirers made him much less critical of life than he had been in the past. His letters are filled with recantations of what he had come to regard as his earlier cynicism. He wrote to James Hannay, for example, in 1854:

Love is a higher intellectual exercise than Hatred; and when you get one or two more of those young ones you write so pleasantly about, you'll come over to the side of the kind wags, I think, rather than the cruel ones.<sup>5</sup>

The mental unrest of his earlier life disappeared, and he became a relatively calm and peaceful hedonist. But there always remained a certain *fond* of unresolved melancholy in his nature. He is describing himself, when he writes of Harry Esmond in *The Virginians*:

He was not unhappy—to those about him most kind—most affectionate, obsequious even to the women of his family, whom he scarce ever contradicted; but there had been some bankruptcy of his heart, which his spirit never recovered. He submitted to life rather than enjoyed it.<sup>6</sup>

Thackeray's exhaustion, the relaxation of his intellectual and artistic standards, and his reconciliation to life are all reflected in the writings of his last ten years. He had been forced to work "crop after crop from his brain, manuring hastily, sub-soiling indifferently, cutting and saving and cutting again." With his break with Mrs. Brookfield he ceased to live an intense emotional life, and he had consequently to draw on capital rather than on interest in his fiction. While he reproduced the surface of life as accurately as ever, he did not cut below it as he had in *Vanity Fair* and *Esmond*. There are no Amelias or Lady Castlewoods in his later books. He came more and more to talk about things

that have no direct connection with his story, knowing that his readers regarded him as a privileged friend of the family, whose charm, wit, and sagacity made his opinion on any topic worth having. Anthony Trollope underlines his most serious failing :

he allowed his mind to become idle. In the plots which he conceived, and in the language which he used, I do not know that there is any perceptible change ; but in *The Virginians* and in *Philip* the reader is introduced to no character with which he makes a close and undying acquaintance. And this, I have no doubt, is so because Thackeray himself had no such intimacy. His mind had come to be weary of that fictitious life which is always demanding the labour of new creation, and he troubled himself with his two Virginians and his Philip only when he was seated at his desk.<sup>7</sup>

In other words he lost the habit of entire absorption in his characters and their involvements, which had marked his state of mind in earlier days, and as a result his fiction tended to become mere make-believe.

Thackeray's reconciliation to life gives his later books a dominant tone quite different from that of *Vanity Fair* and *Pendennis*. Endeavoring to be playful rather than satiric, he inquired : " I wonder if sneering is of the Devil and laughter not wicked ? " He took pains to be pleasant, to avoid giving offence by too blunt a statement of heterodox opinions. He softened and generalized his revelations of the hidden self-interest that underlies seemingly altruistic actions. He writes in his later books as a father addressing his children rather than as a man of the world speaking in good society. Pen remarks in *Philip* that during his youth he had been considered " a dangerous man," but that now, in maturity, he is a model of propriety.

I am ready to say that Nero was a monarch with many elegant accomplishments, and considerable natural amiability of disposition. I praise and admire success wherever I meet it. I make allowances for faults and shortcomings, especially in my superiors ; and feel that, did we know all, we should judge them very differently. People don't believe me, perhaps, quite so much as formerly. But I don't offend : I trust I don't offend.<sup>8</sup>

There are two ways of regarding the alteration that took place in Thackeray's attitude towards life as he grew older. His later point of view may be considered either as a surrender or as a victory. Thackeray himself regarded it as a victory, though his assurance was troubled by uneasy twinges of doubt. When John Cordy Jeaffreson published a novel in 1863 called *Live It Down*, Thackeray said to him : " It would be the very title for my story of my own life."<sup>9</sup> In a letter to his mother

just after he finished *Philip*, a sequel to a narrative that he had published in 1840, he wrote :

Think of the beginning of the story of the little Sister in the Shabby Genteel Story twenty years ago and the wife crazy and the Publisher refusing me 15£ who owes me £13.10 and the Times to which I apply for a little more than 5 guineas for a week's work, refusing to give me more and all that money difficulty ended, God be praised, and an old gentleman sitting in a fine house like the hero at the end of a story.<sup>10</sup>

*Denis Duval*, indeed, the novel on which Thackeray was engaged when he died, is written by the hero at the end of his own story. Old Admiral Duval, an *alter ego* of Thackeray, reflects :

'Tis the privilege of old age to be garrulous, and its happiness to remember early days. As I sink back in my arm-chair, safe and sheltered *post tot discrimina*, and happier than it has been the lot of most fellow sinners to be, the past comes back to me—the stormy past, the strange unhappy yet happy past—and I look at it scared and astonished sometimes ; as huntsmen look at the gaps and ditches over which they have leapt, and wonder how they are alive.<sup>11</sup>

Some readers find serenity in this and similar passages, others merely complacency.

Whatever our estimate of Thackeray's later outlook, there can be no doubt that it led to a different kind of fiction than that which he wrote before *The Newcomes*. His later novels, particularly *The Virginians* and *Denis Duval*, are romantic in mood if they remain realistic in treatment. In the late forties and early fifties Thackeray had delighted to burlesque romantic fiction, and when he wrote *Esmond*, he created as serious and profound a study of human nature as any of his novels of modern life. In his later books, however, he sought primarily to amuse his readers, to lead them into "happy, harmless fable-land";<sup>12</sup> and though his keen sense of reality did not desert him, his aim in writing fiction became essentially frivolous, as it had never been before.

It is not essential, then, that the relation between Thackeray's personal history and his later work be considered in detail. We may pass directly to a summary of the findings of this study and an application of these findings to the problem with which we began, the degree to which Thackeray's authority as a novelist is impaired by his intermittent sentimentalism.

## II

Our best starting point is Thackeray's native endowment as a writer. He was eminently, as he himself said, a man of "the *genus irritabile*."<sup>13</sup> He had an acute sensitivity that

kept him uneasily conscious of everything happening around him, a rawness of nerve that did not allow him to cushion himself against the encounters of everyday intercourse with the dullness of perception that protects the ordinary human being. "He had distinct and rather painful sensations," Walter Bagehot comments, "where most men have but confused and blurred ones. . . . He could not help seeing everything and what he saw made so near and keen an impression upon him that he could not again exclude it from his understanding."<sup>14</sup>

Particularly as a young man his reactions were often of an intensity far beyond those of a normally constituted individual. As one example among many, consider his response to public executions. This grim feature of early nineteenth century life held a terrible fascination for him. He returned home one night in 1838 from Hugo's romantic tragedy *Marion Delorme* "disgusted and sick." /—

The last act ends with an execution [he told his wife], & you are kept waiting a long hour listening to the agonies of parting lovers, & grim speculations about head-chopping, dead-bodies, coffins & what not—Bah! I am as sick as if I had taken an emetic.<sup>15</sup>

Two years later he forced himself to witness the hanging of the murderer Courvoisier. For a fortnight he could think of nothing else.

It is most curious the effect his death has had on me [he noted] . . . it weighs upon the mind, like cold plum pudding on the stomach.<sup>16</sup>

The poor wretch's face will keep itself before my eyes, and the scene mixes itself up with all my occupations.<sup>17</sup>

Yet Thackeray did not fail to see that his sensitivity was an artistic asset as well as a personal inconvenience. He makes Sterne tell him during their colloquy in *The Roundabout Papers* :

Your sensibility is your livelihood, my worthy friend. You feel a pang of pleasure or pain? It is noted in your memory, and some day or other makes its appearance in your manuscript.<sup>18</sup>

We have seen how the circumstances of Thackeray's personal history established in his mind a sharp dichotomy between the outside world and his home circle. When mingling with those whom he did not know well, he kept the eager response of his sensitive temperament under severe restraint. Rebuffed and deceived in youth, he took care not to expose himself to further disappointments in maturity. Though he remained a gregarious man and though his manner was not aloof or unfriendly, casual

acquaintances were apt to find him cold and reserved. He mingled in society as an observer rather than as an active participant, seeking primarily to satisfy an omnivorous curiosity. He describes himself when he writes of Arthur Pendennis :

As another man has an ardour for art or music, or natural science, Mr. Pen said that anthropology was his favourite pursuit ; and had his eyes always eagerly open to its infinite varieties and beauties : contemplating with an unflinching delight all specimens of it in all places to which he resorted, whether it was the coquetting of a wrinkled dowager in a ball-room, or a high-bred young beauty blushing in her prime there ; whether it was a hulking guardsman coaxing a servant girl in the park—or innocent little Tommy that was feeding the ducks whilst the nurse listened.<sup>19</sup>

By training himself to understand and judge the men and women whom he met, he built up the knowledge of human nature in society which informs his great fictional panoramas. It was from this level of his experience as well that he drew the materials for many of his memorable characters, for Jos Sedley, old Miss Crawley, and old Osborne ; for Major Pendennis and Blanche Amory ; for Barnes Newcome ; perhaps for Becky Sharp herself. We have seen that in these creations his control rarely falters ; they are perfect of their kind. But we have observed as well that they are presented as a rule in terms of external impressions, that Thackeray hardly tries in these portraits to penetrate to the deeper levels of personality.

The Thackeray seen by the intimates of his home circle was a very different person from the Thackeray who figured in London society. Perhaps Carlyle expresses most pungently the contrast between Thackeray's mask and the face beneath it. He wrote to Emerson in 1853 :

Thackeray . . . is a big fellow, soul and body, of many gifts and qualities (particularly in the Hogarth line, with a dash of Sterne superadded), of enormous appetite withal, and very uncertain and chaotic in all points except his *outer breeding*, which is fixed enough and *perfect*, according to the modern English style. I rather dread explosions in his history. A *big*, fierce, weeping, hungry man ; not a strong one.<sup>20</sup>

The testimony of Anthony Trollope, who also knew Thackeray both in society and at home, is to the same effect :

I regard him as one of the most tender-hearted human-beings I ever knew, who, with an exaggerated contempt for the foibles of the world at large, would entertain an almost equally exaggerated sympathy with the joys and troubles of individuals around him.<sup>21</sup>

The picture emerges of a restless, insecure man, who despite his outer poise and polish was permanently uneasy, permanently in need of reassurance.

He found this reassurance, as we have seen, in the companionship of a succession of women: his mother, his wife, Mrs. Brookfield, and, during his last years, his daughters. Except for Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth, who was of a rather more vigorous nature, they all had much the same character: soft, simple, innocent, and womanly. Indeed, Thackeray himself occasionally noted his almost exclusive predilection for this feminine type. In 1840 he wrote to his mother of a new acquaintance.

There is nothing about her but simplicity: & I like this milk-&-water in women—perhaps too much, under-valuing your ladyship's heads, and caring only for the heart.<sup>22</sup>

Moments of intimate communion with these women whom he loved made life worth living for Thackeray by enabling him to express freely the feelings and responses that he rigidly suppressed in his dealings with the outside world. Through them he made contact with what Arnold has described as "The Buried Life":

Only—but this is rare—  
When a beloved hand is laid in ours,  
When, jaded with the rush and glare  
Of the interminable hours,  
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,  
When our world-deafen'd ear  
Is by the tones of a lov'd voice caress'd,—  
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast  
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again:  
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,  
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know.  
A man becomes aware of his life's flow,  
And hears its winding murmur, and he sees  
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.<sup>23</sup>

Thackeray's "buried life" had a significance for him beyond success and beyond art. It gave him his ultimate values.

### III

Nearly all of the weaknesses that this study has revealed in Thackeray's fiction derived from the part of himself that he kept inviolate from the world at large and shared only with a few intimates, but so too did many of the strong points of his novels. By comparing the gains and losses that resulted from his decision in *Vanity Fair*, to abandon the relatively objective realism of his earlier work, to accept as part of the novelist's responsibility the task of understanding sympathetically and of judging his principal characters, perhaps we can strike a balance with regard to this aspect of his fiction.



We have seen how his loyalty to the "originals" of Amelia, of Mrs. Pendennis, and of Colonel Newcome made it impossible for him to judge these characters with detachment and impartiality. He did not fail to tell the truth about such characters, but he constantly sought to apologize for them and to explain away their shortcomings. Hence the ambiguity in his presentation of them, the sharp discrepancy between what they say and do and Thackeray's estimate of them, which bothers modern readers. /

We have seen also that an otherwise unsatisfactory world was redeemed for Thackeray by the simplicity, tenderness, and warmth of affection that he found in the intimates of his home-circle. Since these qualities assuaged his insecurity and gave him the reassurance that his sensitive temperament demanded, he placed on them a valuation that seems excessive in an age whose serious literature has made a fetish of tough-mindedness. D. H. Lawrence wrote, commenting upon Ernest Hemingway's first book of short stories :

It is really honest. And it explains a great deal of sentimentality. When a thing has gone to hell inside you, your sentimentalism tries to pretend it hasn't. But Mr. Hemingway is through with the sentimentalism.<sup>24</sup>

We too like to think that we are through with sentimentalism, and in reading Thackeray, who is not afraid of giving himself away, who does not shield the vulnerable spots in his personality by maintaining a careful objectivity, we are sometimes made acutely uncomfortable.

Perhaps the head and front of Thackeray's offending is precisely that he knows very well he is giving himself away. Like Sterne, he is quite aware of the sentimental element in his work. "I rank myself among the spoonies," he once confessed to Mrs. Brookfield. "Softheartedness seems to me better than anything."<sup>25</sup> Many passages in his books are in effect continuations of private confessions to the women that he loved best. They give us the Thackeray *intime* who was otherwise revealed only to his closest friends. When beginning *Pendennis* he wrote to Mrs. Brookfield about his mother :

I look at her character, and go down on my knees as it were with wonder and pity. It is Mater Dolorosa, with a heart bleeding with love. Is not that a pretty phrase ? I wrote it yesterday in a book, whilst I was thinking about her—and have no shame somehow now in writing thus sentimentally to all the public ; though there are very few people in the world to whom I would have the face to talk in this way *tete-a-tete*. To you I can because you are made of the same soft stuff.<sup>26</sup>

In *Vanity Fair* there are relatively few of these passages of intimate confidence. As the "Manager of the Performance" Thackeray preserves for the most part the façade that he presented to the outside world. Once he reached an understanding with his audience, however, sentimental passages began to multiply in his stories. By the time he wrote *The Virginians* and *Philip*, they had come to be regarded almost as his trademark. Unhappily, in his later work these passages no longer stemmed directly from experience—he gave up Mrs. Brookfield in 1851, and no one ever quite filled the place that she had occupied in his life—and they consequently came to seem factitious, the expression of emotions that Thackeray still wanted to feel but no longer did feel. Ruskin noted that the "pathetic fallacy" causes uneasiness in descriptions of nature, "the moment the mind of the speaker becomes cold."<sup>27</sup> So it is with the sentimental view that Thackeray takes of his favored characters.

One finds a hint of this tendency as early as chapter fifty of *Vanity Fair*, in which he describes the events leading to Amelia's decision to give up little Georgey Osborne to his grandfather. Thackeray wrote to Leigh Hunt—and it must be granted that Dickens's Harold Skimpole was well qualified to pass on the point—: "I should like you to tell me if there isn't a little delicate fiddle-playing in the last chapter of the present No. XIV."<sup>28</sup> Yet, despite the detached attitude towards his pathetic effects that Thackeray's request implies, the emotion informing this chapter impresses the reader as authentic enough. Only after Thackeray's characters ceased to be real to him did his pathetic effects come to seem contrived. He had written to his mother in 1842, when pressure of work forced him to leave his children in Paris and return to London :

It was pleasant . . . thinking of Anne : . . . [but] when I write to her, it's a days work—blubbering just as I used to do when I left you to go to school—not from any excess of affection filial or paternal as I very well know ; but from sentiment as they call it—the situation was pathetic.<sup>29</sup>

It is because they exploit such abstract pathos, arising out of situations conventionally regarded as in the abstract affecting rather than out of the involvements of his created characters, that certain passages in Thackeray's later fiction seem insincere.

So much for the hazards to which Thackeray was exposed by his decision in *Vanity Fair* and his later books to include in his fiction the people, situations, and emotions that meant most to him in his personal history. We may turn now to the

ways in which his work was strengthened by this resolve. Its great usefulness to him was to make his warmth of feeling, his sense of human solidarity, an available resource on which he could draw, and hence to enable him to explore personal relations with a penetration that he was unable to achieve by other means. Oscar Wilde's dictum that "an ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style"<sup>30</sup> is accepted by many respected modern novelists. But for Thackeray the way to understanding was through sympathy.<sup>31</sup> "Since a novelist is a single person with one sensibility," Virginia Woolf points out, "the aspects of life in which he can believe with conviction are strictly limited."<sup>32</sup> Thackeray partially surmounted this limitation through his intuitive sense of what went on inside people to whom he was bound by close emotional ties. By drawing upon his "buried life," by basing such characters as Amelia and Lady Castlewood upon those persons who humanly meant everything to him, he was able greatly to extend his range as a novelist. In such portraits he pierced to the deeper levels of personality, he showed himself a novelist of character as well as of manners. And it is here, after all, that fiction makes its supreme appeal.

#### IV

Even if it is granted that this sort of intimate portrayal is an essential of classic fiction, the further question remains whether certain of Thackeray's portraits are not spoiled by an excess of the very sympathy that enabled him to conceive them at all. Mr. F. R. Leavis holds that the emotional stresses which drive Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*

involve confusions and immature valuations; they belong to a stage of development at which the capacity to make some essential distinctions has not yet been arrived at—at which the poised impersonality that is one of the conditions of being able to make them can't be achieved. There is nothing against George Eliot's presenting this immaturity with tender sympathy; but we ask, and ought to ask, of a great novelist something more. 'Sympathy and understanding' is the common formula of praise, but understanding, in any strict sense, is just what she doesn't show. To understand immaturity would be to 'place' it, with however subtle an implication, by relating it to mature experience.<sup>33</sup>

The value of Thackeray's portraits of Amelia or Colonel Newcome might be questioned on similar grounds, since Thackeray's excessive praise of these characters prevents him from properly presenting them and hence reveals a comparable failure to achieve "poised impersonality."

The data presented in this book should help to resolve such

doubts. We have seen that Thackeray's temperament was so sensitive as to make it impossible for him to live even with those he loved best without frequent disagreements. He was always acutely aware of what the authors of *The Real Charlotte* describe as "that measuring and crossing of weapons that takes place unwittingly and yet surely in the consciousness of everyone who lives in the intimate connection with another." His pervasive dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the "originals" of Amelia, of Mrs. Pendennis, and of Colonel Newcome determines the fashion in which they are portrayed and insensibly communicates itself to his readers, despite his overt exaltation of these characters. Hence his portraits of such figures are shaped by a tacit judgment which is balanced and mature, though his explicit estimates, the moral epithet that he applies to these characters, controlled as they are by his emotional allegiances, sometimes contradict this tacit judgment. Amelia, Mrs. Pendennis, and Colonel Newcome are shown in the round; dramatically they are completely presented, even if Thackeray's formal evaluation does them only partial justice.

George Eliot says of *The Mill on the Floss* :

Pray notice how one of my critics attributes to me a disdain for Tom [Tulliver]; as if it were not *my* respect for Tom which infused itself into my reader,—as if he could have respected Tom if I had not painted him with respect.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, it is Thackeray alone who can be regarded as responsible for his readers' awareness of discrepancies between text and commentary in his portraits of Amelia and Colonel Newcome. Surely we should recognize that, beside the creative power shown in these portraits, such discrepancies pale into insignificance. "Fiction is not afraid of complexity," writes John Hersey, "as journalism is. A journalist is not allowed to be confused; he must *know*. But it is not necessarily a disadvantage to a novelist to be confused *as a . . . human being*—provided he has discipline *as a writer*."<sup>35</sup> We may freely grant Thackeray's occasional confusion as a human being, if we remember that his discipline as a writer rarely falters. We have seen how Shaw, the most hostile and grudging of his critics, had perforce to admit this truth. "He exhausts all his feeble pathos in trying to make you sorry for the death of Colonel Newcome," Shaw wrote, ". . . but he gives you the facts about him faithfully." These words underline the opposition of modern and Victorian estimates of human values and the incompatibility of satirist of sentiment and sentimental satirist. They are also the tribute of one great master of reality to another.

## NOTES

### CHAPTER ONE

<sup>1</sup> "The Reaction against Tomnyson," *English Critical Essays: Twentieth Century*, ed. Phyllis M. Jones (London, 1933), p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Victorian Prose Masters* (New York, 1901), p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> Laura Benét, *Thackeray of the Great Heart and Humorous Pen* (New York, 1947); Jean Rosalind Gould, *Young Thack · William Makepeace Thackeray* (Boston, 1949); J. Y. T. Greig, *Thackeray; A Reconsideration* (London, 1950); Lionel Stevenson, *The Showman of Vanity Fair* (New York, 1947).

<sup>4</sup> By Mr. Lisle Bell, Professor Lambert Ennis, and myself.

<sup>5</sup> See particularly David Cecil, *Early Victorian Novelists* (London, 1934), John W. Dodds, *Thackeray · A Critical Portrait* (New York, 1941); V. S. Pritchett, *In my Good Books* (London, 1943); Raymond Las Vergnas, *W. M. Thackeray, l'homme, le penseur, le romancier* (Paris, 1932). George Saintsbury's *A Consideration of Thackeray* (London, 1931) collects the introductions provided by thus distinguished Thackerayan for the Oxford edition of Thackeray's *Works*, 17 volumes (London, 1908). This edition will be cited hereafter as *Works*.

<sup>6</sup> Examples from two generations, Bloomsbury and anti-Bloomsbury, will suffice to illustrate this point. Writing on "The Artist and Psycho-Analysis" in *The Hogarth Essays* (New York, 1928, p. 292), Roger Fry argues that most readers go to novels for day-dreams in print. But, he continues, "No one who hoped to get an ideal wish-fulfilment would go to *Mme. Bovary* or *Anna Karenina* or even *Vanity Fair*." Similarly, F. R. Leavis remarks in *The Great Tradition* (London, 1949, p. 21) that "Thackeray is a greater Trollope. . . . It will be fair enough to Thackeray if *Vanity Fair* is kept current as, in a minor way, a classic."

<sup>7</sup> I borrow these terms from the late E. K. Brown's admirable essay "David Copperfield," *Yale Review*, XXXVII (Summer, 1948), 651-666. See also Percy Lubbock's *The Craft of Fiction* (London, 1921), and the fourth chapter of Edith Wharton's *The Writing of Fiction* (London, 1925). Though Mr. Lubbock strives to hold the balance even between "crowded" and "bare" novel, his sympathies are clearly with the narrow Jamesian form. Mrs. Wharton leans the other way.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, the discussion of *Vanity Fair* in Mr. Lubbock's study.

<sup>9</sup> *Works*, 24 volumes (London, 1907-1909), VII, x.

<sup>10</sup> *Works*, XI, 99-100,

<sup>11</sup> The same, p. 216.

<sup>12</sup> The same, p. 229.

<sup>13</sup> *Works*, XII, 198.

<sup>14</sup> The same, p. 164.

<sup>15</sup> The same, p. 410.

<sup>16</sup> *Works*, XIV, 9.

<sup>17</sup> The same, p. 118.

<sup>18</sup> *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (London, 1933), p. 96.

<sup>19</sup> *Notes on Life and Letters, Works*, 20 volumes (London, 1921-1927), XVIII, 35. Conrad acknowledges a kinship to Thackeray in his scornful reference to "The End of the Tether," the tale in which he goes farthest in his concessions to "the unofficial sentimentalism" of his time, as "the touching, tender, noble captain Newcome—Colonel Whalley thing." (*Letters from Conrad*, ed. Edward Garnett, London, 1928, p. 188).

- <sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Bowen, "Notes on Writing a Novel," *Orion II* (London, 1945), p. 18.
- <sup>21</sup> J. W. Cross, *George Eliot's Life as Related in her Letters and Journals*, 3 volumes (Edinburgh, 1885), I, 433.
- <sup>22</sup> *Modern Painters, Works*, ed. E. T. Cook and A. D. O. Wodderburn, 39 volumes (London, 1902-1912), V, 204, 210.
- <sup>23</sup> *Works*, ed. Forrest Morgan, 5 volumes (Hartford, 1891), II, 195.
- <sup>24</sup> P. 3.
- <sup>25</sup> "Thackeray's Tutelary Spirit," *The Listener*, 15 September 1949, p. 452.
- <sup>26</sup> *The Subjection of Women, Three Essays*, ed. M. G. Fawcett (London, 1912), p. 535.
- <sup>27</sup> *The Enjoyment of Literature* (New York, 1935), pp. 118-119.
- <sup>28</sup> *Twilight on Parnassus* (London, 1939), p. 5.
- <sup>29</sup> *Essays in Criticism: Second Series, Works*, 15 volumes (London, 1903-1904), IV, 35.
- <sup>30</sup> "Thackeray's Works," *Edinburgh Review*, XCIX (1854), 230.
- <sup>31</sup> Preface to *John Bull's Other Island, Works*, 30 volumes (New York, 1930-1932), XI, 21.
- <sup>32</sup> "Victor Hugo's Romances," *Works*, 26 volumes (London, 1922-1923), IV, 48.
- <sup>33</sup> Of all Victorian novelists the Brontës have suffered most from these aberrations. See, for example, Rosamond Langbridge, *Charlotte Brontë, A Psychological Study* (London, 1929), and Virginia Moore, *The Life and Eager Death of Emily Brontë* (London, 1936).
- <sup>34</sup> Miss Crawley, Jos Sedley and Major Perdonnis, whose prototypes can be identified with equal positiveness upon other evidence.
- <sup>35</sup> *Henry James: Letters to A. C. Benson and Auguste Monod*, ed. E. F. Benson (London, 1930), p. 40.
- <sup>36</sup> *Letters of Henry James*, ed. Percy Lubbock, 2 volumes (London, 1920), I, 116.
- <sup>37</sup> Preface to *The Spoils of Poynton, Works*, X, v.
- <sup>38</sup> Preface to *The Princess Casamassima, Works*, V, xxiii.
- <sup>39</sup> (London, 1938), pp. 216-217.
- <sup>40</sup> *The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray*, ed. Gordon N. Ray, 4 volumes (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1945-1946), II, 772-773. This edition will be cited hereafter as *Letters*.
- <sup>41</sup> *Works*, XIII, 665.
- <sup>42</sup> *Works*, XII, 670.
- <sup>43</sup> *Works*, XIII, 464, *Letters*, II, 779-780.
- <sup>44</sup> *Works*, XV, 361, 443.
- <sup>45</sup> *Letters*, IV, 378.
- <sup>46</sup> The same, III, 438.
- <sup>47</sup> Manuscript recollections of Lady Ritchie, 1864-1865.
- <sup>48</sup> *Letters*, II, 407.
- <sup>49</sup> *Letters*, III, 459.
- <sup>50</sup> The same, p. 438.
- <sup>51</sup> *Works*, XII, 767.
- <sup>52</sup> Preface to *The Princess Casamassima, Works*, V, xi.

## CHAPTER TWO

<sup>1</sup> James Hannay, *A Brief Memoir of the Late Mr. Thackeray* (Edinburgh, 1864), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Soliloquies in England* (New York, 1922), p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Calcutta Gazette*, 9 January 1806; and H. W. B. Moreno, "The Birthplace of William Makepeace Thackeray," *Century Review*, I (1915), 8. I shall not as a rule cite sources for the factual particulars of my narrative in this chapter, since I plan to cover the same material in greater detail in my biography of Thackeray.

<sup>4</sup> *Works*, XIV, 66.

- <sup>5</sup> *Works*, XVII, 495.
- <sup>6</sup> The same, p. 554.
- <sup>7</sup> In *Wee Willie Winkie*.
- <sup>8</sup> See John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, ed. J. W. T. Ley (London, 1928), pp. 23-36.
- <sup>9</sup> "Gentlemen-Rankers."
- <sup>10</sup> *Works*, XIII, 30.
- <sup>11</sup> Manuscript letter to Mrs. Butler, 10 ? July, 1820.
- <sup>12</sup> Quoted by Maria Knox, Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth's sister, in a manuscript letter to Mrs. Butler, 16 February 1821.
- <sup>13</sup> *Letters*, II, 361.
- <sup>14</sup> "Public Schools," *Works* (London, 1851), p. 185.
- <sup>15</sup> Disraeli, *Vivian Grey, Novels and Tales*, ed. Philip Guedalla, 12 volumes (London, 1926-1927), I, 4.
- <sup>16</sup> *Letters*, I, 262.
- <sup>17</sup> The same, p. 152.
- <sup>18</sup> The same, p. 279.
- <sup>19</sup> The same, p. 295-296.
- <sup>20</sup> Richard Bodingfield, "Recollections of Thackeray," *Cassell's Magazine*, 11 (1870), 232.
- <sup>21</sup> *Letters*, I, 311.
- <sup>22</sup> See Appendix. A Shawe Genealogy.
- <sup>23</sup> Richard Cannon, *Historical Record of the Eighty-seventh Regiment, or the Royal Irish Fusiliers* (London, 1853) pp. 95-96; *Ecclesiastical Records (Wills), Bengal*, IV, 226-227, Commonwealth Relations Office.
- <sup>24</sup> *Letters*, I, 321.
- <sup>25</sup> The same, p. 424.
- <sup>26</sup> The same, pp. 303-304.
- <sup>27</sup> The same, p. 319.
- <sup>28</sup> The same, pp. 318-319.
- <sup>29</sup> See chapters 25 to 28.
- <sup>30</sup> *Letters*, I, clxv.
- <sup>31</sup> The same, p. 316.
- <sup>32</sup> The same, p. 321.
- <sup>33</sup> The same, p. 354.
- <sup>34</sup> *Letters of Thomas Carlyle to his Youngest Sister*, ed. Charles Townsend Copeland (Boston, 1899), p. 86.
- <sup>35</sup> *Letters*, I, 397.
- <sup>36</sup> *Works*, I, 299-300.
- <sup>37</sup> Manuscript letter from Isabella Thackeray to Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth, 23 May 1839.
- <sup>38</sup> *Letters*, I, 394.
- <sup>39</sup> The same, p. 420.
- <sup>40</sup> The same, p. 467.
- <sup>41</sup> The same, p. 462.
- <sup>42</sup> The same, p. 463.
- <sup>43</sup> The same, p. 467.
- <sup>44</sup> The same, p. 483.
- <sup>45</sup> *Works*, XIV, 929.
- <sup>46</sup> *Letters*, II, 8.
- <sup>47</sup> *Letters*, I, 473.
- <sup>48</sup> The same, p. 480.
- <sup>49</sup> *Letters*, II, 15.
- <sup>50</sup> The same, pp. 30-31.
- <sup>51</sup> *Letters*, IV, 146.
- <sup>52</sup> *Works*, XV, 502.
- <sup>53</sup> *Letters*, II, 440.
- <sup>54</sup> *Letters to her Family*, ed. L. Huxley (London, 1924), p. 171.
- <sup>55</sup> *Letters*, II, 193.

<sup>56</sup> *Last Words on Translating Homer, Works, V, 327.*

<sup>57</sup> *Letters, II, 14.*

<sup>58</sup> The same, p. 7.

<sup>59</sup> An inference from the following remark reported by Lady Ritchie: "My father once said to me when I was a girl: 'You needn't read "Barry Lyndon," you won't like it.'" (*Biographical Introductions to Thackeray's Works, 13 volumes, London, 1898-1899, IV, xxxiii.*) These essays will be cited hereafter as *Biographical Introductions*.

<sup>60</sup> It should be noted that the novel exists in two forms: *The Luck of Barry Lyndon*, which appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* between January and December, 1844; and *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon*, a careful revision of 1856. Thackeray's pruning of his text in the *Memoirs* was everywhere in the interest of artistic consistency, but the preoccupations that led him to write the book are much clearer in the *Luck*, on which my discussion is accordingly based. Thackeray did not approve the change in title. When he first saw proof of the third volume of his *Miscellanies*, in which the *Memoirs* appeared, he inquired of his publishers, Bradbury and Evans: "Why was the title to *B. Lyndon* omitted as I wrote it? Does it not appear in the single parts?" (*Fraser's* manuscript letter).

<sup>61</sup> *Works, VI, 288.* See also pp. 208 and 30:

<sup>62</sup> Barry does have a code of sorts. Thackeray makes him reverence a kind of parody of aristocratic standards, a code of gentlemanliness distorted to fit his own character; much as Browning's Caliban is made to create a God in his own image. "He was constant to his form of worship," Barry says of his gambling partner, turned pious in old age; "and I, as a man of honour and principle, was resolute to mine." (*Works, VI, 207*). Thus Barry prides himself on being always ready to give satisfaction in a duel, on an ostentatious free-handedness with servants and strangers combined with a neglect of the claims of friends and relatives, on the prompt payment of his gambling debts (though of no others), and on an absolute reverence for birth and rank. What these traditional traits of the "gentleman" are worth, Thackeray says in effect, is shown by the character of those who boast of them.

<sup>63</sup> See *Works, VI, 234, 278-279, 309-311.*

<sup>64</sup> Thackeray suppressed these passages in his revision of 1856.

<sup>65</sup> *Works, VI, 310.*

<sup>66</sup> The same, pp. 310-311.

<sup>67</sup> The same, p. 196.

<sup>68</sup> See *Letters, II, 30-31.*

<sup>69</sup> Yet even at this period the grim tone of the novel tested Thackeray's powers of endurance. When the book was little more than half completed, he complained that it was "lying like a night-mare" on his mind. (*Letters, II, 149*); and its final instalments were written "slowly & with great difficulty." (*The same, p. 156*).

### CHAPTER THREE

<sup>1</sup> In "Vanity Fair: One Version of the Novelist's Responsibility," *Essays by Divers Hands, XXV* (London: The Royal Society of Literature, 1950), 87-101.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters, II, 282.*

<sup>3</sup> "You know you are only a piece of Amelia—My mother is another half: my poor little wife *est pour beaucoup*" (*The same, p. 394*).

<sup>4</sup> The same, p. 440.

<sup>5</sup> See *Letters, I, 321.*

<sup>6</sup> *Works, XI, 131-132.*

<sup>7</sup> The same, p. 881. In the 1864 edition the phrase is altered to "a dear little creature" (*The same, p. 7*).

<sup>8</sup> The same, p. 84.

<sup>9</sup> The same, p. 134.

<sup>10</sup> The same, p. 211.

<sup>11</sup> Ed. Wilfrid Ward (London, 1913), pp. 191-192.



<sup>12</sup> *Works*, XI, 320-321

<sup>13</sup> The same, p. 360.

<sup>14</sup> The same, pp. 371-372.

<sup>15</sup> The same, p. 383.

<sup>16</sup> *Letters*, II, 309.

<sup>17</sup> One is reminded of the very different pictures that Dickens drew of the young Maria Beadnell as Dora in *David Copperfield* and of the middle-aged Maria Beadnell as Flora Finching in *Little Dorrit*. There is considerable evidence, it should be noted, that Thackeray modelled the Amelia of *Vanity Fair*'s later chapters upon Mrs. Brookfield quite as much as upon Isabella. In the early months of 1848 Thackeray was not yet profoundly attached to Mrs. Brookfield, since his intimacy with her was just beginning. See *Letters*, II, 394-395, 684.

<sup>18</sup> *Works*, XI, 852-853.

<sup>19</sup> He perhaps yielded to pressure from his readers in this matter. "Mrs. Liddell one day said, 'Oh, Mr. Thackeray, you must let Dobbin marry Amelia.' 'Well,' he replied, 'he shall: and when he has got her, he will not find her worth having.'" (*Letters*, II, 642). George Eliot's comment concerning Trollope's *Sir Harry Hotspur of Humblethwaite* applies equally to the conclusion of Thackeray's history of Dobbin and Amelia: "Men are very fond of glorifying that sort of dog-like attachment," she wrote (Cross, *George Eliot's Life*, III, 128). "It is one thing to love because you falsely imagine goodness,—that belongs to the finest natures,—and another to go on loving when you have found out your mistake."

<sup>20</sup> *Letters*, II, 423.

<sup>21</sup> *Works*, XI, 878.

<sup>22</sup> "*Vanity Fair*—and *Jane Eyre*," LXXXIV (December, 1848), 159-160.

<sup>23</sup> "*Vanity Fair*," 12 August 1848, p. 795.

<sup>24</sup> "*Vanity Fair*," 22 July 1848, p. 709.

<sup>25</sup> A statement in the introduction to the interesting edition of *Vanity Fair* published by Chivers at Bath in 1919. Whibley had been equally positive in *William Makepeace Thackeray* (London, 1903), p. 96. "There is little doubt," he wrote, "that Thackeray despised Amelia."

<sup>26</sup> "Mrs. Rawdon Crawley," XCV (June, 1911), 1022.

<sup>27</sup> *The Enjoyment of Literature*, pp. 118-119.

<sup>28</sup> *Works*, XI, 2.

<sup>29</sup> *The Portrait of a Lady*.

<sup>30</sup> *In My Good Books* (London, 1943), pp. 118, 121.

<sup>31</sup> *Works*, III, 425.

<sup>32</sup> *Ecclesiastical Records, Bengal*, IV, 58, 124, 156, Commonwealth Relations Office.

<sup>33</sup> *Register of Bengal Civilians*, p. 130, Commonwealth Relations Office.

<sup>34</sup> The same.

<sup>35</sup> *Ecclesiastical Records (Wills), Bengal*, 1801, number 28, Commonwealth Relations Office.

<sup>36</sup> *Ecclesiastical Records, Bengal*, V, 356, Commonwealth Relations Office.

<sup>37</sup> *Ecclesiastical Records (Wills), Bengal*, 1805, number 57, Commonwealth Relations Office.

<sup>38</sup> *Ecclesiastical Records, Bengal*, VII, 199, Commonwealth Relations Office.

<sup>39</sup> Major V. C. P. Hodson, *The Officers of the Bengal Army*, 4 volumes (London, 1927-1947).

<sup>40</sup> *Ecclesiastical Records, Bengal*, V, 95; VIII, 40; *Ecclesiastical Records (Wills), Bengal*, 1819, pp. 865-872; Commonwealth Relations Office.

<sup>41</sup> *Calcutta Gazette*, 12 February 1807, supplement, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup> Hodson, *Bengal Army*.

<sup>43</sup> *Ecclesiastical Records (Wills), Bengal*, 1819, pp. 865-872, Commonwealth Relations Office; manuscript letter from Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth to Mrs. Butler, 3 February 1820.

<sup>44</sup> Manuscript letters from Maria Knox to Mrs. Butler, 9 October 1821 and 1 February 1822.

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- <sup>45</sup> Manuscript letter, 25 August 1820.
- <sup>46</sup> Manuscript family letters of the eighteen-twenties.
- <sup>47</sup> *Letters*, I, 273.
- <sup>48</sup> The same, p. 289.
- <sup>49</sup> The same, p. 290.
- <sup>50</sup> The same, p. 468.
- <sup>51</sup> The same, p. 465.
- <sup>52</sup> *Works*, III, 425.
- <sup>53</sup> *Biographical Introductions*, I, xxvii.
- <sup>54</sup> The same, p. xxviii.
- <sup>55</sup> Undated manuscript letter.
- <sup>56</sup> *Letters*, II, 309.
- <sup>57</sup> The same, pp. 323-324.
- <sup>58</sup> *Works*, XI, 103.
- <sup>59</sup> The same, p. 128.
- <sup>60</sup> There is one lapse from this detachment (The same, p. 164).
- <sup>61</sup> This passage must have been written at precisely the time when Mrs. Butler was returning to Paris to die. Thackeray did not have the heart to continue his portrait of Miss Crawley after his grandmother's death.
- <sup>62</sup> *Works*, XI, 437.
- <sup>63</sup> R. B. Ramsbotham, "The Editor's Note Book," *Bengal Past and Present*, XXXIV (1927), 144-145. There is no real discrepancy between Beveridge's testimony as recorded here and as recorded by C. W. Gurner, "The Editor's Note Book," *Bengal Past and Present*, XLII (1931), 187, where Beveridge denies that Merrick Shawe himself was the original of Jos Sedley. Lord Beveridge informs me in a letter of 17 November 1948 that there is no further evidence bearing upon the point in his family papers.
- <sup>64</sup> See above, p. 13.
- <sup>65</sup> Lady Ritchie, "The Boyhood of Thackeray," *Saint Nicholas*, XVII (1889), 105.
- <sup>66</sup> H. T. Prinsep, *General Register of the Hon'ble East India Company's Civil Servants of the Bengal Establishment from 1790 to 1842* (Calcutta, 1844), p. 339.
- <sup>67</sup> The same.
- <sup>68</sup> *Register of Bengal Civilians*, p. 1701, Commonwealth Relations Office.
- <sup>69</sup> Ursula Low, *Fifty Years with John Company* (London, 1936), pp. 199-200. Miss Low makes George write "gambles rude."
- <sup>70</sup> The same, p. 199.
- <sup>71</sup> Gerald Ritchie, *The Ritchies in India* (London, 1920), p. 96.
- <sup>72</sup> Low, *Fifty Years with John Company*, p. 290.
- <sup>73</sup> The same, pp. 290-291.
- <sup>74</sup> The same, p. 291.
- <sup>75</sup> The same, p. 293.
- <sup>76</sup> The same, p. 294.
- <sup>77</sup> The same, p. 296.
- <sup>78</sup> The same, p. 297.
- <sup>79</sup> The same, p. 301.
- <sup>80</sup> The same, p. 306.
- <sup>81</sup> Stephen Wheeler, *Annals of the Oriental Club, 1824-1858* (London, 1925), p. 147.
- <sup>82</sup> *Letters*, II, 173.
- <sup>83</sup> The same, p. 145.
- <sup>84</sup> In the *Register of Bengal Civilians*, p. 1701, Commonwealth Relations Office, his death is recorded as having occurred on 4 October 1844. Administration of his goods and chattels was granted to Emily Anne Dick, wife of William Fleming Dick, next of kin, on 18 October 1844 (*Administrations*, 1844, number 76, Somerset House).
- <sup>85</sup> Gerald Ritchie (*Ritchies in India*, p. 96) writes that George "committed suicide in Paris in 1844. My father had to break the news to the Irvines." Since I have not succeeded in finding any printed account of George's death, I

have preferred to follow Indian records in locating the place of its occurrence at Geneva.

<sup>86</sup> His property was sworn under £800 in 1844 and resworn the following year under £600 (*Administrations*, 1844, number 76, Somerset House).

<sup>87</sup> *Works*, XI, 27.

<sup>88</sup> The same, p. 28.

<sup>89</sup> The same, p. 875.

<sup>90</sup> The same, p. 877. The crimes of Burko and Thurtell need no gloss, but it may not be superfluous to point out that Thackeray himself celebrated the exploits of Catherine Hayes both in a story and in a ballad (*Works*, III, 3-187; VII, 102-105).

<sup>91</sup> This parallel between fiction and life gives rise to an interesting speculation. We have seen that most of George's money (like Jos's) had disappeared at the time of his death. Was there a Becky in his life siphoning it off, and did Thackeray know about her?

#### CHAPTER FOUR

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, XII, xxxv.

<sup>2</sup> The same.

<sup>3</sup> Nathaniel Wright Stephenson, *The Spiritual Drama in the Life of Thackeray* (London, 1913).

<sup>4</sup> *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, ed. F. G. Kenyon, two volumes (London, 1898), I, 401.

<sup>5</sup> See *Essays by Divers Hands*, XXV, 94-96.

<sup>6</sup> *Letters*, II, 534.

<sup>7</sup> The same, pp. 538-539.

<sup>8</sup> *Views and Reviews*, ed. Le Roy Phillips (Boston, 1908), p. 233. Phillips' text reads: "the painter itself."

<sup>9</sup> *Letters*, II, 457.

<sup>10</sup> See above, p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> I owe this significant detail to Professor Ennis.

<sup>12</sup> Lady Ritchie, *Chapters from Some Unwritten Memoirs* (London, 1894), p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> *Letters*, IV, 378.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Bedingfield, *Cassell's Magazine*, II, 12.

<sup>15</sup> *Letters*, II, 506.

<sup>16</sup> *Chapters*, p. 16.

<sup>17</sup> *Letters*, II, 506.

<sup>18</sup> John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, ed. J. W. T. Loy (London, 1928), p. 556. See chapter twenty of *David Copperfield*.

<sup>19</sup> Manuscript letter.

<sup>20</sup> *Letters*, II, 525.

<sup>21</sup> The same, p. 207.

<sup>22</sup> *Biographical Introductions*, VIII, xxxvii.

<sup>23</sup> *Cassell's Magazine*, II, 136.

<sup>24</sup> *Letters*, III, 12-13.

<sup>25</sup> Manuscript letter of 19 July 1855, partially printed in *Letters*, IV, 440.

<sup>26</sup> Lady Ritchie's manuscript *Reminiscences* of 1878.

<sup>27</sup> Tennyson described *Pendennis* to Edward FitzGerald (*Letters and Literary Remains*, ed. W. A. Wright, 7 volumes, London, 1902-1903, I, 280-281) as "quite delicious; it seemed to him so mature."

<sup>28</sup> On this point see Stephen Gwynn's preface to *Pendennis*, three volumes (London, 1900), I, xi.

<sup>29</sup> *Works*, XII, 13.

<sup>30</sup> The same, p. 18.

<sup>31</sup> The same, p. 183.

<sup>32</sup> The same, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> The same, p. 987.

<sup>34</sup> The same, p. 18. See also pp. 25, 528, 641-642, 735-737.

<sup>35</sup> The same, p. 518.

<sup>36</sup> See below, pp. 92-95.

<sup>37</sup> *Letters*, II, 661.

<sup>38</sup> Manuscript letter, 6 July 1856. This passage has been printed in my article "New Light on Thackeray," London *Sunday Times*, 29 May 1949.

<sup>39</sup> See *Letters*, II, 340-341.

<sup>40</sup> Perhaps Miss Drury. At any rate Brookfield wrote to his wife in Yellowplush English on 27 August 1847: "is muth r is now jellus of drury & . . . she is to go to the write abowt under sun rich dus pretext or uther" (Manuscript letter).

<sup>41</sup> *Works*, XII, 730-731.

<sup>42</sup> The same, pp. 735-736. Lady Ritchie writes: "I can remember the morning Helen died. My father was in his study in Young Street, sitting at the table at which he wrote. It stood in the middle of the room, and he used to sit facing the door. I was going into the room, but he motioned me away. An hour afterwards he came into our schoolroom, half-laughing and half-ashamed, and said to us: "I do not know what James can have thought of me when he came in with the tax-gatherer just after you left, and found me blubbering over Helen Pendennis's death." (*Biographical Introductions*, II, xxxix).

<sup>43</sup> *Letters*, III, 13.

<sup>44</sup> "Thackeray and his Female Characters," *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, N.S. VIII (1864), 162.

<sup>45</sup> So George Orwell drives home an assertion that Agnes Wickfield is the most disagreeable of Dickens's heroines by remarking, "Agnes is . . . the real legless angel of Victorian romance, almost as bad as Thackeray's Laura" (*Critical Essays*, London, 1946, p. 54).

<sup>46</sup> *The Enjoyment of Literature*, p. 119.

## CHAPTER FIVE

<sup>1</sup> William Makepeace Thackeray (London, 1903), p. 145.

<sup>2</sup> The same, p. 133.

<sup>3</sup> *Works*, XII, 92.

<sup>4</sup> So I interpret the phrase, though it could conceivably refer simply to the Major's Wellingtonian nose. The same, p. 486.

<sup>5</sup> The same, p. 92.

<sup>6</sup> The same, p. 104.

<sup>7</sup> The same, p. 125.

<sup>8</sup> The same, p. 109.

<sup>9</sup> The same, pp. 461-462.

<sup>10</sup> The same, pp. 2, 27.

<sup>11</sup> The Marquess of Steyne, Wonham, and Wagg in Thackerayan terms. The same, pp. 651-656 and elsewhere.

<sup>12</sup> The same, p. 979.

<sup>13</sup> The same, pp. 209-210.

<sup>14</sup> In the Genealogical Office, Dublin Castle, there is a pedigree of the Shaws of High Bulhalgh, which carries the line back to Edward II. The relation of this family to the Galway Shawes is not clear. Under the date 22 February 1819 Lt. Col. Merrick Shawe has noted upon this document: "The above is a True Copy of an antient pedigree on Parchment now in the possession of Mrs. Anna Shawe now wife of (Roger) Jones of Dollanstown in Coy. of Meath Esq., and of Mrs. Sydney Shaw now wife of the Honble Matthew Plunket which two ladies are the daughters and coheirs of Colonel Henry Shawe late of the Eleventh Regimt. of Foot." See Appendix, A Shawe Genealogy.

<sup>15</sup> *Add. Mss.* 13,767, folio 172, British Museum.

<sup>16</sup> The same, folios 85-88.

<sup>17</sup> W. O. 27/748, folio 52A, Public Record Office. In this statement of services Shawe writes that he "Raised men for an Emergency Sept 1782 in the first Connaught Regt. of Fencibles & served one year in Ireland." Since he was not yet of age in May of 1789, he cannot have been more than fourteen at the time of this exploit.

<sup>18</sup> *Add. Mss.* 13,767, folios 1-2, British Museum.

<sup>19</sup> The same, folio 5.

<sup>20</sup> The same, folio 8.

<sup>21</sup> F. A. Hayden, *Historical Record of the 76th "Hindustan" Regiment* (Lichfield, 1908), pp. 6-15, 262; W. O. 27/748, folio 52A, Public Record Office.

<sup>22</sup> *Add. Mss.* 13, 767, folio 44, British Museum.

<sup>23</sup> Hayden, *Historical Record*, p. 262.

<sup>24</sup> *Add. Mss.* 13, 767, folios 10-12, British Museum.

<sup>25</sup> The same, folio 13.

<sup>26</sup> The same, folio 18.

<sup>27</sup> The same, folio 33.

<sup>28</sup> The same, folios 40-41.

<sup>29</sup> The same, folio 44.

<sup>30</sup> The same, folios 85-88.

<sup>31</sup> The same, folios 115-117.

<sup>32</sup> *Add. Mss.* 13,781, folio 49, British Museum.

<sup>33</sup> *Diaries and Correspondence of the Right Hon. George Rose*, ed. L. V. Harcourt, 2 volumes (London, 1860), II, 165.

<sup>34</sup> *Add. Mss.* 13,781, folios 78-80, British Museum.

<sup>35</sup> *Historical Manuscripts Commission, Report on the Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., preserved at Dropmore*, 9 volumes (London, 1892-1915), IV, 474.

<sup>36</sup> *Add. Mss.* 13,781, folio 43, British Museum.

<sup>37</sup> The same, folio 69.

<sup>38</sup> *Add. Mss.* 37,281, folio 297, British Museum.

<sup>39</sup> *Add. Mss.* 13,767, folio 113, British Museum.

<sup>40</sup> *Add. Mss.* 13,781, folio 7, British Museum.

<sup>41</sup> The same, folios 9-10.

<sup>42</sup> The same, folio 104.

<sup>43</sup> The same, folio 47.

<sup>44</sup> The same.

<sup>45</sup> *Supplementary Despatches*, ed. by his son, 15 volumes (London, 1858-1872), V, 318.

<sup>46</sup> *The Croker Papers*, ed. Louis J. Jennings, 3 volumes, (London, 1885), I, 337.

<sup>47</sup> The same.

<sup>48</sup> *Despatches*, ed. Colonel Gurwood, 12 volumes (London, 1834-1838), III, 700-701. A large volume of Shawe's letters to Wellington survives among the Wellesley Papers (*Add. Mss.* 13,778, British Museum), and some of the Duke's replies are printed in his *Despatches*.

<sup>49</sup> *Add. Mss.* 13,767, folio 52, British Museum.

<sup>50</sup> The same, folio 114.

<sup>51</sup> The same, folio 88.

<sup>52</sup> W. O. 27/748, folio 52A, Public Record Office.

<sup>53</sup> *Diaries of George Rose*, II, 165.

<sup>54</sup> *The Creevey Papers*, ed. Sir. Herbert Maxwell, 2 volumes (London, 1904), I, 89-90, 118.

<sup>55</sup> *Add. Mss.* 13,767, *passim*, British Museum.

<sup>56</sup> On 15 August 1809 Shawe sent a long letter to Sydenham from "Before Flushing" describing the fighting (*Add. Mss.* 37,287, folio 1ff., British Museum).

<sup>57</sup> Hayden, *Historical Record*, pp. 76-79.

<sup>58</sup> W. O. 27/748, folio 52A, Public Record Office.

<sup>59</sup> Wellington, *Supplementary Despatches*, VII, 266.

<sup>60</sup> The same, VII, 279.

<sup>61</sup> *Dublin Evening Packet*, 11 November 1843.

<sup>62</sup> Wellington, *Supplementary Despatches*, X, 19.

- <sup>63</sup> *Add. Mss.* 37,310, folios 167-168, 37,313, folio 321; British Museum.
- <sup>64</sup> *Add. Mss.* 38,295, folio 328, British Museum.
- <sup>65</sup> *Royal Kalendar*, 1820 and 1823.
- <sup>66</sup> Wellington, *Supplementary Despatches*, VII, 272.
- <sup>67</sup> *The Croker Papers*, I, 192.
- <sup>68</sup> Robert Roumere Pearce, *Memoirs and Correspondence of the most Noble Richard Marquess Wellesley*, 3 volumes (London, 1846), III, 379-384.
- <sup>69</sup> Information kindly provided from the archives of these clubs by their present secretaries.
- <sup>70</sup> *Works*, XII, 2.
- <sup>71</sup> *Add. Mss.* 37,310, folio 167, British Museum.
- <sup>72</sup> *Add. Mss.* 37,313, folios 321-322, British Museum.
- <sup>73</sup> *Add. Mss.* 37,310 folio 146, British Museum.
- <sup>74</sup> *The Creevey Papers*, I, 123, 129. It must be granted that Creevey at this period was bitterly hostile to Wellesley and therefore an unreliable witness. Two years later Lady Holland called him a "mischievous toad" because of his jokes about the Marquess. But Creevey's reports are borne out in *The Farington Diary* (ed. James Greig, 8 volumes, London 1922-1928) under 8 April 1811, where Sir Thomas Lawrence speaks of Wellesley's "having ruined his fortune by his excessive expenses on women."
- <sup>75</sup> *Add. Mss.* 37,310, folios 163-164, British Museum.
- <sup>76</sup> *Add. Mss.* 37,298, folio 241, British Museum.
- <sup>77</sup> See Pearce, *Wellesley*, III, 379-386.
- <sup>78</sup> *Add. Mss.* 38,295, folio 328, British Museum.
- <sup>79</sup> The same.
- <sup>80</sup> See *The Wellesley Papers*, 2 volumes (London, 1914), II, 157, 164, 195-196; *Letters of George IV*, ed. A. Aspinall, 3 volumes (Cambridge, 1938), III, 287-288; *Add. Mss.* 37,302, folios 141, 306, 310, British Museum. On Canning's death Shawe wrote to Sir William Knighton: "Humble an individual as I am, I feel the loss of I might almost presume to say a friend—who always treated me with a degree of kindness & condescension which I can never forget" (*Letters of George IV*, III, 288).
- <sup>81</sup> Pearce, *Wellesley*, III, 388-389.
- <sup>82</sup> *Add. Mss.* 37,313, folios 18-19, British Museum.
- <sup>83</sup> *Letters of George IV*, III, 151-152.
- <sup>84</sup> *The Creevey Papers*, II, 63.
- <sup>85</sup> *Add. Mss.* 37,311, folio 96, British Museum.
- <sup>86</sup> *Creevey's Life and Times*, ed. John Gore (London, 1934), pp. 374-375.
- <sup>87</sup> *The Creevey Papers*, II, 328.
- <sup>88</sup> The same, II, 267.
- <sup>89</sup> The same.
- <sup>90</sup> *Wellesley Papers*, II, 254.
- <sup>91</sup> *Add. Mss.* 37,312, folio 69, British Museum.
- <sup>92</sup> *Boyle's Court Guide for January*, 1840, p. 582.
- <sup>93</sup> *Letters*, I, 306.
- <sup>94</sup> The same, p. 308.
- <sup>95</sup> The same, pp. 397, 431, 439.
- <sup>96</sup> The same, p. 397.
- <sup>97</sup> The same, p. 431.
- <sup>98</sup> *Add. Mss.* 37,313, folios 18-19, British Museum.
- <sup>99</sup> *Letters*, II, 21.
- <sup>100</sup> *Add. Mss.* 13,767, folio 111, British Museum.
- <sup>101</sup> *Letters*, II, 78-79.
- <sup>102</sup> *Add. Mss.* 37,316, folio 149, British Museum.
- <sup>103</sup> The same paper printed a brief obituary notice four days later: "Colonel Meyrick Shaw [sic], whose lamented death we recently recorded, was a man of great talents, businesslike habits, and suavity of manner. He was long honoured with the friendships of the Duke of York and the Marquess Wellesley, on the staff of both of whom he served at different periods, at the Horse Guards, as

under secretary and private secretary, during the Marquess's Governor Generalship of India, and Vice-Royalty of Ireland. By his decease many families of distinction are placed in mourning, as he was nearly allied to the Fersse and Trench families of Galway, and to Mr. Fitzpatrick of Bognor, for whose advancement to the peerage he so zealously exerted himself, and whom he anxiously wished to see placed in the enjoyment of his hereditary title and estates." Mr. Fitzpatrick was presumably John Wilson Fitzpatrick, illegitimate son of the first Earl of Upper Ossory. The titles of the first Earl became extinct at his death in 1818, but Mr. Fitzpatrick was created Baron Castleton of Upper Ossory in 1869.

<sup>104</sup> *Works*, XII, 995.

<sup>105</sup> The same, p. 91.

<sup>106</sup> Not that Thackeray was slavishly faithful to a single model in his portrait of Major Pendennis. Much observation besides that which he devoted to Colonel Shawe went into the making of the Major. His success with the character, as with Becky Sharp, is to be accounted for in part by the extent to which it embodied certain aspects of his own personality. "My vanity would be to go through life as a gentleman," he told Mrs. Brookfield (*Letters*, II, 511), "—as a Major Pendennis you have hit it." And we find him destroying a letter to Lady Ashburton, "because it was too pert and like Major Pendennis—talking only about Lords and great people in an easy off hand way" (The same, p. 653).

<sup>107</sup> *Works*, XII, 517.

<sup>108</sup> The same, p. 1001.

<sup>109</sup> The same, p. 655.

<sup>110</sup> *Partial Portraits* (London, 1888), p. 119.

<sup>111</sup> For a further development of this theme see *Works* XII, 461.

<sup>112</sup> The same, p. 906.

<sup>113</sup> The same, p. 91.

<sup>114</sup> The same, p. 109.

<sup>115</sup> The same, p. 102.

<sup>116</sup> The same, p. 203.

<sup>117</sup> The same, p. 559.

<sup>118</sup> The same, pp. 455, 456, 893.

<sup>119</sup> Very occasionally, as if suddenly mindful of his novel's theme and of the cover design of his monthly parts, Thackeray reproaches the Major as the embodiment of the selfish worldliness from which Pen is to be rescued. In these passages, it must be granted, Thackeray's tone is deplorably out of harmony with that which he adopts towards the Major elsewhere in *Pendennis*. See, for example, *Works*, XII, 585-586.

## CHAPTER SIX *Ch.*

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, II, 685-686.

<sup>2</sup> 21 December 1850, pp. 929-930

<sup>3</sup> *Yesterdays with Authors* (Boston and New York, 1900), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> 6 November 1852, pp. 1199-1201.

<sup>5</sup> "Mr. Thackeray's New Novel," 22 December 1852, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Letters*, II, 736.

<sup>7</sup> See above, pp. 53-54.

<sup>8</sup> See particularly I, xciv-c.

<sup>9</sup> *The Fable of the Bees*, ed. F. B. Kaye, 2 volumes (Oxford, 1924), I, 324.

<sup>10</sup> *Letters*, II, 277.

<sup>11</sup> *Biographical Introductions*, II, xxx.

<sup>12</sup> Manuscript letter to William Henry Brookfield, 31 July, 1850.

<sup>13</sup> Manuscript letter to Jane Octavia Brookfield, 19 October, 1844.

<sup>14</sup> The Rev. W. Tuckwell, *A. W. Kinglake* (London, 1902), p. 103.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted by Lord Lyttleton in a memoir prefixed to *Sermons by the late Rev. W. H. Brookfield*, ed. by Mrs. Brookfield (London, 1875), p. xvii.

- <sup>16</sup> *The Greville Memoirs*, 1814-1860, ed. Lytton Strachey and Roger Fulford, 8 volumes (London, 1938).
- <sup>17</sup> Manuscript letter to William Henry Brookfield, 31 July, 1850.
- <sup>18</sup> *Letters*, II, 380.
- <sup>19</sup> The same, III, 183.
- <sup>20</sup> The same, II, 231.
- <sup>21</sup> Manuscript letter to William Henry Brookfield, 13 October, 1848.
- <sup>22</sup> Information communicated to me by Mrs. Richard Fuller, Lady Ritchie's daughter.
- <sup>23</sup> Manuscript letter, 26 December 1848.
- <sup>24</sup> Manuscript letter, September 1851.
- <sup>25</sup> Manuscript letter, 13 October 1848.
- <sup>26</sup> *Letters*, II, 475-476.
- <sup>27</sup> The same, IV, 431.
- <sup>28</sup> Manuscript letter, 28 April 1849.
- <sup>29</sup> Manuscript letter, 3 May 1849.
- <sup>30</sup> Thackeray seems to have thought that Brookfield was feigning illness. "Is Wm. really unwell at Southton?" he inquired of Mrs Brookfield (*Letters*, II, 768).
- <sup>31</sup> Frances Brookfield, *The Cambridge Apostles* (London, 1906), p. 275.
- <sup>32</sup> *Letters*, IV, 431.
- <sup>33</sup> The same, p. 430.
- <sup>34</sup> Manuscript letter, September 1851, partly printed in *Letters*, IV, 431-432.
- <sup>35</sup> Manuscript letter, 26 September 1851.
- <sup>36</sup> "I wrote a bit yesterday that was quite Satanic," he notes in the same letter, "and raged about with a dreadful gaiety." Thackeray is apparently referring here to the final paragraph of the Prologue: "I look into my heart and think that I am as good as my Lord Mayor, and know I am as bad as Tyburn Jack. Give me a chain and red gown and a pudding before me, and I could play the part of alderman very well, and sentence Jack after dinner. Starve me, keep me from books and honest people, educate me to love dice, gun, and pleasure, and put me on Hounslow Heath, with a purse before me and I will take it. 'And I shall be deservedly hanged,' say you, wishing to put an end to this prosing. I don't say no. I can't but accept the world as I find it, including a rope's end, as long as it is in fashion." (*Works*, XII, 16).
- <sup>37</sup> *Letters*, II, 361.
- <sup>38</sup> The same, IV, 432, corrected from the manuscript.
- <sup>39</sup> *Cakes and Ale* (New York, 1935), pp. 305-306.
- <sup>40</sup> *Letters*, II, 815.
- <sup>41</sup> The theme is one to which Thackeray returns in various passages of Book One. See *Works*, XIII, 74-76, 93-98, 115-120, 136-137.
- <sup>42</sup> The same, p. 116.
- <sup>43</sup> The same, p. 96.
- <sup>44</sup> The same, pp. 96-97.
- <sup>45</sup> The same, p. 117.
- <sup>46</sup> The same, p. 119.
- <sup>47</sup> The same, p. 120.
- <sup>48</sup> The same, pp. 83-87.
- <sup>49</sup> See the same, pp. 75-76.
- <sup>50</sup> *Letters*, III, 248.
- <sup>51</sup> *Works*, XIII, 128.
- <sup>52</sup> The same, p. 131.
- <sup>53</sup> The same, p. 168.
- <sup>54</sup> The same, pp. 167-168.
- <sup>55</sup> Manuscript letter, September 1851.
- <sup>56</sup> *Works*, XIII, 172. There are passages in this part of the novel which form a direct rather than a dramatic commentary on Thackeray's state of mind after his break with Mrs. Brookfield. The reflections on p. 101, for example, are clearly inspired by his longing for a renewal of the companionship that she gave him.



<sup>57</sup> The same, p. 173.

<sup>58</sup> Manuscript letter, 14 February 1856.

<sup>59</sup> *Works*, XIII, 213-214.

<sup>60</sup> *Letters*, II, 470.

<sup>61</sup> *Works*, XIII, 463.

<sup>62</sup> *Letters*, III, 391.

<sup>63</sup> Rossetti, *The House of Life*, sonnet XCVII.

<sup>64</sup> *Essays* (London, 1882), p. 258.

<sup>65</sup> John Taylor Brown, *Dr. John Brown* (Edinburgh, 1903), pp. 96-97.

<sup>66</sup> *Letters*, II, 646.

<sup>67</sup> The same, p. 650.

<sup>68</sup> The same, p. 813.

<sup>69</sup> *Works*, XII, 601, 632.

<sup>70</sup> *Letters*, II, 652.

<sup>71</sup> *Works*, XII, xxxvii.

<sup>72</sup> The same, p. xxxvi.

<sup>73</sup> *Notes on Novelists* (London, 1914), pp. 256-257.

<sup>74</sup> Manuscript letter, June 1850.

<sup>75</sup> "Notes on Writing a Novel," *Orion*, II (1945), 21.

<sup>76</sup> Manuscript letter to Miss Perry, 7 December 1852.

<sup>77</sup> *Appreciations* (London, 1889), p. 108.

<sup>78</sup> *Collected Essays and Papers*, 4 volumes (London, 1923) III, 56.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

<sup>1</sup> Manuscript letter to Mrs. Elliot and Miss Perry of 13-15 July 1853, partially published in *Letters*, IV, 435.

<sup>2</sup> Manuscript letter to Mrs. Elliot and Miss Perry of 28 July 1853.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters*, III, 287.

<sup>4</sup> The same, p. 294.

<sup>5</sup> "English Novelists," *The Romance of English Literature*, ed. W. J. Turner (New York, 1944), p. 250.

<sup>6</sup> Manuscript letter, 8 July 1855.

<sup>7</sup> The information concerning the Carmichael-Smyths which follows is drawn chiefly from Mr. Evelyn Carmichael's article "Carmichael, Earl of Hyndford" in Sir James Balfour Paul, *The Scots Peerage*, 9 volumes (Edinburgh, 1904-1914), IV, 568-573, and from Mr. Carmichael's archives at Berrington Hall, Shrewsbury. There are articles on Dr. James Carmichael-Smyth and Sir James Carmichael-Smyth in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>8</sup> Mr. Carmichael has a transcript of this circular.

<sup>9</sup> One of these publications, issued in 1830, is in the British Museum. Mr. Carmichael has another, dated the same year, the title of which reads: *An appeal to the King's most excellent Majesty, and to the British nation, by William Carmichael-Smyth, Esq. thirteen years one of the Paymasters of Exchequer-Bills; from which office he was removed on the 11th of June 1824, by the arbitrary, unjust, inhuman, and illegal FIAT of the late Earl of Liverpool, Lord Viscount Goderich, and Lord Lowther; three of the then Lords Commissioners of his Majesty's Treasury: not only without any investigation of his conduct, but even without being made acquainted with the crimes or offence with which he was charged: and now denied JUSTICE by THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.*

<sup>10</sup> In Mr. Carmichael's manuscript family book.

<sup>11</sup> The data concerning Major Carmichael-Smyth's military career which follow are drawn from Major Hodson, *Officers of the Bengal Army*, IV, 142-143; John Philippart, *The East India Military Calendar*, 3 volumes (London, 1823-1826), II, 337-340; and Colonel H. M. Vibart, *Addiscombe; Its Heroes and Men of Note* (Westminster, 1894), pp. 57-62.

<sup>12</sup> *Letters*, I, exii-exiii.

- <sup>13</sup> *Ecclesiastical Records, Bengal*, Commonwealth Relations Office.
- <sup>14</sup> Manuscript letter, 4 October 1820.
- <sup>15</sup> Manuscript letter, 25 December 1821.
- <sup>16</sup> Manuscript letter to Mrs. Butler, 26 October 1821.
- <sup>17</sup> Manuscript letter from Mrs. Carmichael-Smyth to Mrs. Butler, 16 February 1821.
- <sup>18</sup> Manuscript letter to Mrs. Butler, 4 October 1820.
- <sup>19</sup> Manuscript letter to Mrs. Knox, 25 December 1821.
- <sup>20</sup> *Letters*, II, 334.
- <sup>21</sup> See *Præterita, Works*, XXXV, 197.
- <sup>22</sup> *Letters*, II, 37.
- <sup>23</sup> Manuscript letter, 6 December 1856.
- <sup>24</sup> Lady Ritchie's manuscript *Reminiscences* of 1878.
- <sup>25</sup> *Miss Williamson's Divagations* (London, 1882), pp. 150-151.
- <sup>26</sup> *Chapters from Some Unwritten Memoirs*, f. v. 15-16, 18-21.
- <sup>27</sup> *Letters*, II, 734.
- <sup>28</sup> The same, p. 38.
- <sup>29</sup> The same, p. 53. See also pp. 309, 762-763.
- <sup>30</sup> Manuscript letter, 6 December 1856.
- <sup>31</sup> *Letters*, IV, 28.
- <sup>32</sup> The contribution of Major Carmichael-Smyth's brother, General Charles Carmichael, was chiefly to provide Thackeray with a model for Colonel Newcome's appearance and manner of dress. See *Letters*, IV, 196.
- <sup>33</sup> The same, p. 57.
- <sup>34</sup> The same, p. 196.
- <sup>35</sup> *Works*, XXXV, 82.
- <sup>36</sup> *Works*, XIV, 36.
- <sup>37</sup> The same, p. 10.
- <sup>38</sup> The same, pp. 11-12.
- <sup>39</sup> The same, pp. 13-14.
- <sup>40</sup> The same, p. 185.
- <sup>41</sup> *Letters*, III, 341.
- <sup>42</sup> The same, p. 350.
- <sup>43</sup> *Biographical Introductions*, VIII, xxxvi-xxxvii.
- <sup>44</sup> *Works*, XIV, 855.
- <sup>45</sup> The same, p. 836.
- <sup>46</sup> The same, pp. 929-930.
- <sup>47</sup> The same, pp. 86-87.
- <sup>48</sup> The same, pp. 952-953.
- <sup>49</sup> Saintsbury, *A Consideration of Thackeray*, p. 219.
- <sup>50</sup> *Works*, XIV, 1007.
- <sup>51</sup> January, 1855, p. 93.
- <sup>52</sup> 8 August 1855.
- <sup>53</sup> Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, *My Life in Two Hemispheres*, 2 volumes (London, 1898), II, 119.
- <sup>54</sup> *Letters*, III, 464-466.
- <sup>55</sup> The same, IV, 380.
- <sup>56</sup> "Some Gentlemen in Fiction" (1888), *Works*, XII, 324.
- <sup>57</sup> *William Makepeace Thackeray*, p. 201.
- <sup>58</sup> *Trio* (London, 1938), p. 35.
- <sup>59</sup> Quoted by Henry A. Beers, *The Connecticut Wits* (New Haven, 1920), p. 101, without notation of source. "Mr. Shaw says the quotation is authentic," writes his secretary, Mr. F. E. Lowenstein, in a communication of 6 June 1949; "but he cannot tell you where it occurs."
- <sup>60</sup> *The Quintessence of Ibsenism, Works*, XIX, 125.
- <sup>61</sup> Ed. Bradford Allen Booth (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1947), p. 203. Professor Booth preserves Trollope's spelling.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

- <sup>1</sup> *Letters*, III, 415.
- <sup>2</sup> The same, p. 114.
- <sup>3</sup> The same, p. 190.
- <sup>4</sup> The same, p. 254.
- <sup>5</sup> Hannay, *A Brief Memoir of the Late Mr. Thackeray* (Edinburgh, 1864), p. 19.
- <sup>6</sup> *Works*, XV, 28.
- <sup>7</sup> *Autobiography*, pp. 204-205.
- <sup>8</sup> *Works*, XVI, 58.
- <sup>9</sup> Jeaffreson, *A Book of Recollections*, 2 volumes (London, 1894), I, 305.
- <sup>10</sup> *Letters*, IV, 271.
- <sup>11</sup> *Works*, XVII, 256. Compare Thackeray's earlier treatment of the same theme quoted above, p. 11.
- <sup>12</sup> The same, XIV, 1009.
- <sup>13</sup> The same, XVII, 619.
- <sup>14</sup> "Sterne and Thackeray," *Works*, II, 186-187.
- <sup>15</sup> *Letters*, I, 362.
- <sup>16</sup> The same, p. 453.
- <sup>17</sup> The same, p. 454.
- <sup>18</sup> *Works*, XVII, 619.
- <sup>19</sup> The same, XII, 588.
- <sup>20</sup> *The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. C. E. Norton, 2 volumes (London, 1883), II, 229-230.
- <sup>21</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 155.
- <sup>22</sup> *Letters*, I, 460.
- <sup>23</sup> *Poems: Second Series* (London, 1855), pp. 188-189.
- <sup>24</sup> Review of *In Our Time*, reprinted in the Viking *Portable Lawrence*, ed. Diana Trilling (New York, 1947), p. 645.
- <sup>25</sup> *Letters*.
- <sup>26</sup> The same, IV, 419.
- <sup>27</sup> *Modern Painters, Works*, V, 210.
- <sup>28</sup> *Letters*, II, 347.
- <sup>29</sup> The same, p. 53.
- <sup>30</sup> *The Picture of Dorian Gray, Works*, twelve volumes (New York, 1927), IV, 6.
- <sup>31</sup> Hence his denunciation of *Mme. Bovary*, after what must have been a most imperceptive and inadequate reading of the novel: "The book is bad. . . . It is a heartless, coldblooded study of the downfall and degradation of a woman." (H. Sutherland Edwards, *Personal Recollections*, London, 1900, p. 36).
- <sup>32</sup> *The Common Reader: First Series*.
- <sup>33</sup> *The Great Tradition*, p. 42.
- <sup>34</sup> Cross, *George Eliot's Life*, II, 295-296.
- <sup>35</sup> "The Novel of Contemporary History," *Atlantic Monthly*, CLXXXIV (November, 1949), 82.

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